

ARGOSY

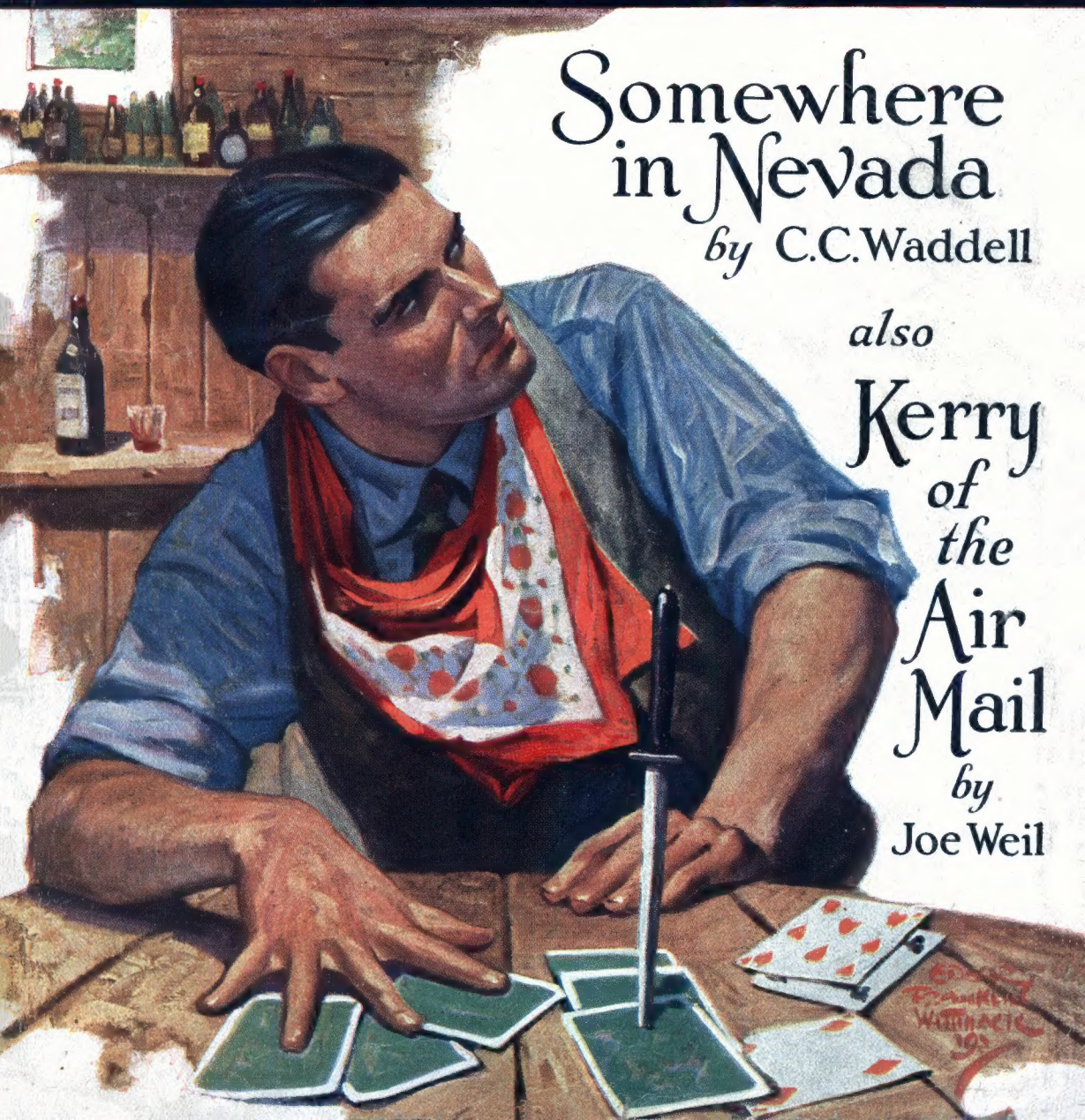
NOV.
12

ALL-STORY
WEEKLY

PRICE
10¢

Somewhere
in Nevada
by C.C. Waddell

also
Kerry
of
the
Air
Mail
by
Joe Weil

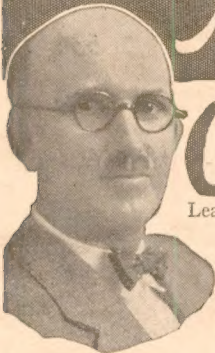




Children are the parents of tomorrow.
Help guard their health. Buy Christmas Seals.

THE NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Guaranteed Twin Service for Ambitious Men!



O. C. MILLER
Director Extension Work

The American School

Is the first in the home-study field to recognize the need of guaranteeing its courses with a money-back contract. If the training fails to accomplish the benefits you expect, thus all risk and doubt are eliminated—either the training will help you to a better job and a raise in pay or it will cost you nothing. To better carry out this important service, we maintain a National employment department which keeps in touch with the employers of Draftsmen all over the U. S. All this without extra charge to our students and graduates.

Professional Outfit Given!

You will naturally expect the American School to give you the best kind of instruments and tools with the best kind of training. This outfit is good enough to use professionally after you finish your training. Mail coupon for description.



T
Training
Preparing
you for a
better job
and a Raise
in Pay - - -

E
Employment
Service
Placing you
in it, or
money
refunded!

Come into Drafting!

Learn drafting—how to *make* and *read* plans, and the doors of opportunity in all mechanical, building, and engineering lines swing open for you! There are more well-paid Drafting jobs open today than in any other one profession or trade. There's a variety, a fascination to Drafting that will grip you. No other work is so interesting, *so well paid*—no other field offers equal opportunities for quick promotion.

The Draftsman is the Boss of the Works!

Destroy blue-prints and *plans*, and the wheels of all Industry will stop until new ones can be made. Every move of every workman on the job is *controlled* by the Draftsman through his plans. Railroads, public works, buildings of a hundred sorts, machinery, electricity, automobiles—all manufacturing and construction *start* on the Drafting table! That's the kind of work to get into, friend. Where you have the same chance as anybody else to make a *quick success*!

**If You Are
Now Earn-
ing Less than
\$40 a Week**

I guarantee to prepare you for a fine drafting position, right in your home, in your spare time; then I guarantee to help you find such a position paying at least *50% more than you earn today*, within 60 days after you complete this training, or I will refund small amount you pay for tuition. We make this agreement to prove this instruction will make you a *real Draftsman*. Back of this guarantee are the entire resources and reputation of this million dollar institution.

O.C. Miller

O. C. MILLER
Director Extension Work

The American School

Dept. D-84, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

3 DRAFTING Lessons FREE!

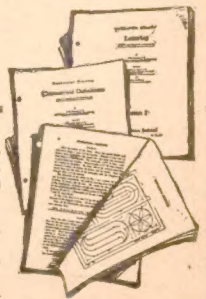
—to prove you can learn at home in spare time!

You'll be surprised how *quickly* you can learn Drafting by our new one-step-at-a-time method. We start you off by doing actual Drafting room jobs from the very beginning. Before you know it, you are battling out professional plans like a veteran. Get the first three lessons—the coupon brings them. Do them. Test your ability to master Drafting at home. Without cost or obligation.

O. C. MILLER, Director Extension Work
American School, Dept. D-84, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago.

Your offer to send me three lessons free and facts about the opportunities in Drafting and about your course, looks good to me. It is understood I am not obligated in any way in making this request.

Name _____
Address _____
Occupation _____ Age _____



ARGOSY-WEEKLY

VOLUME 190

CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 12, 1927

NUMBER 4

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

FOUR SERIAL STORIES

- Somewhere in Nevada C. C. Waddell 481
A Three-Part Story—Part One
- Queen of Clubs Hulbert Footner 534
A Six-Part Story—Part Two
- The Return of George Washington George F. Worts 569
A Six-Part Story—Part Five
- Conrad the Saxon Joseph Ivers Lawrence 601
A Three-Part Story—Part Three

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

- Kerry of the Air Mail Joe Weil 502

FOUR SHORT STORIES

- When the S-12 Went Down H. L. Gates 555
- The End of Apollo Bennett Ladd 591
- Pick Your Own Moral Gordon Stiles 625
- Married and Broke Jack Bechdolt 630

POETRY

- Homesick Cowboy . . . Edgar Daniel Kramer 533 Sonnet of a Shoemaker . . E. Leslie Spaulding 624
- The Last Chance Olin Lyman 568 Indestructible H. Stanley Haskins 638
- The Reader's Viewpoint 639

Beginning next week:

'GEECHEE SHAD

By CHARLES FRANCIS COE

Author of "Moonglow," "Alkali," "Me: Gangster," etc.

tells how a war veteran, who has fought for his life at the front, fights for his living at home. A graphic story that will hold the reader enthralled.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and

LONDON: HACHETTE & CIE.,

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,

16-17 King William Street, Charing Cross, W. C. 2

111 Rue Reaumur

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President and Treasurer

RICHARD H. TETHERINGTON, Vice-President and Secretary

By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; in Canada, \$7.00, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1927

Entered as second-class matter July 15, 1920, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879

TITLE REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE

NEW & IMPROVED MODEL BOILER EXTRA STRONG COPPER

Most Practical Boiler and Cooker

Made with large 5-inch Improved Cap and Spout. Safe, practical and simple. Nothing to get out of order, most substantial and durable on the market. Will last a life time, gives real service and satisfaction.

Easily Cleaned

Cap removed in a second; no burning of hands. An ideal low pressure boiler and pasteurizer for home and farm.

Save 20%

By ordering direct from factory. No article of such high quality and utility ever sold at such amazingly low prices. Prices quoted are cash with order or one-fourth cash, balance C.O.D. Send check or money order; prompt shipment made in plain strong box. The only boiler worth having. Large Catalog Free.



HOME MANUFACTURING CO.

Dept. 3281 18 E. Kinzie St. Chicago, Illinois

YOU CAN OIL PAINT

Amazing new method teaches men or women to earn after first lesson. OIL PAINT photos at home—portraits, landscapes, or art subjects. Many earn \$18 to \$100 and more a week. OIL PAINT OUTFIT GIVEN at No EXTRA COST. Graduates furnished employment. Send now for free illustrated book.

PICTORIAL ART STUDIOS, INC.

Dept. B-M 2926 Broadway Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen! A Handy Expel and Repel CIGARETTE LIGHTER. Very convenient and useful at all times. Has clip, making the appearance of an ordinary pencil.

Remove Cap and you have a lighter

Just enclose a dollar bill, stamps, or money order. Price postpaid \$1.00
CLIFTON WARE, Dept. B, 419 Ave. G, Ft. Madison, Iowa



EVERY STORY COMPLETE

MUNSEY

Out each month on the 20th

Is the *only high grade monthly* magazine that publishes every story complete in each issue.

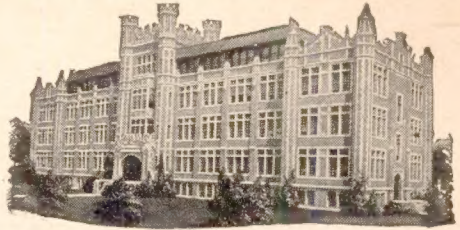
Munsey's contains 192 pages of clever fiction.

No story continued to the next issue.

25c a copy at the news-stand or \$3.00 per year by mail direct to your home. Canadian postage extra.

The Frank A. Munsey Company
280 Broadway, New York City

Home of the International Correspondence Schools



Go to High School at Home

You can secure a high school education right at home by studying the splendid new courses recently prepared by the International Correspondence Schools.

These courses are equivalent to the courses given in resident high schools. They have been specially arranged for men and women who wish to meet college entrance examinations, to qualify for a business position, or to make up the education they missed when forced to leave school too soon. A diploma is awarded at graduation.

Mail Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2228-D, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course before which I have marked an X:

- ☐ College Preparatory Course
- ☐ High School Commercial Course
- ☐ High School English Course
- ☐ High School Vocational Course

Name.....

Address.....

PIN A DOLLAR BILL TO THIS

and get this genuine leather 5-window pass case. Masonic or Shrine Emblem Stamped on in gold free. Holds Railroad Passes, Auto License, Lodge Cards, etc. Your name or other stamping 35c extra per line. Cash must accompany order.



WE carry
EVERYTHING MASONIC

Send for free catalogue No. 10 M.C., of Books, Monitors, Jewelry; No. 11 M.C., of Lodge Supplies.

We Have Been in Business 67 Years!

REDDING & COMPANY 200 Fifth Avenue New York
Desk M. C.

GENUINE FRENCH BRIAR PIPE SET

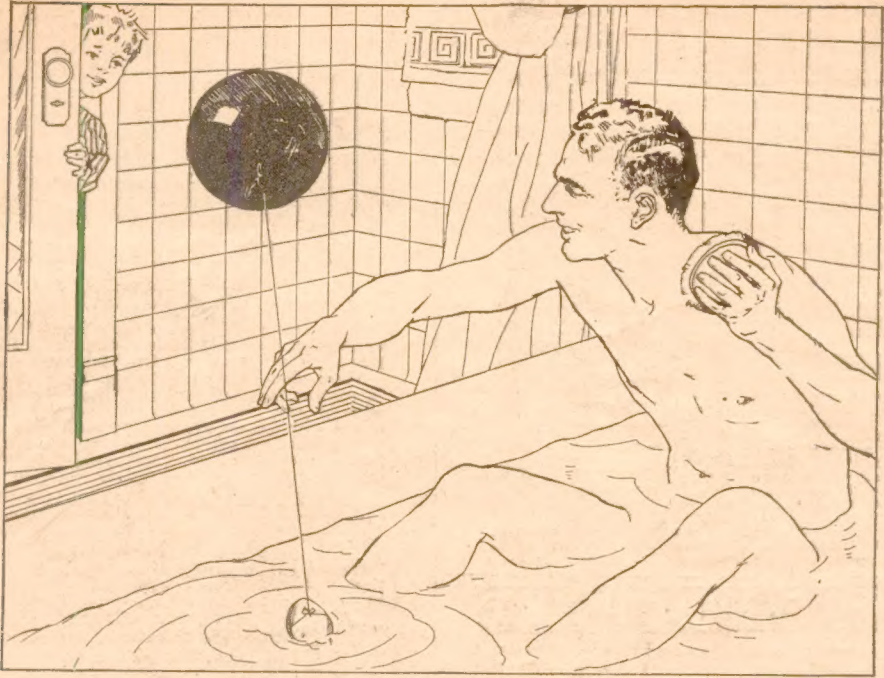
For Only \$2.75
MOST IDEAL GIFT!



Magnificent smoking outfit, beautifully polished and engraved, imported when the French franc was lowest. Manufactured to retail at the \$10 price stamped in each box, we are offering them to you direct from our wholesale dept. at only \$2.75. Set consists of two genuine French Briar pipes treated to require no breaking-in. Amberlite mouthpieces; fancy Amberlite cigar and cigarette holders. Each set is fitted in a beautiful strongly made plush and silk-lined case. Complete, \$2.75.

SEND NO MONEY.
Pay postman \$2.75 plus postage on delivery. Money refunded if not satisfied.

H. & H. SALES CO., 81 Bowery, Dept. P-58, New York, N. Y.



To balloon-stealing fathers

James the Aged had been a sinker-soap sufferer for years. He had wasted incalculable hours hop-frogging around the tub-bottom after jeering, rainbow-tinted soap that sank like a lead bullet. Young Jimmy had had *his* troubles, too.

On the evening after the circus young Jimmy was struggling with his sinker-cake. It shied here and it hid there. It *laughed* at him ha-ha. Then *he* invented the balloon-levitation act. (Principle of Physics: balloon plus sinker-soap counteracts gravity.)

It was a good act. It was so good that James the Aged adopted it the very next day, as you see. But complications are

about to ensue. James the Young wants that balloon back—*now!*

What to do. What to do!

"Jimmy," cajoles the Aged Parent, suddenly inspired, "tell your mother I'll give you back your balloon if she will dig me up a cake of Ivory Soap."

Note to soap-diving fathers: Don't steal the young man's balloon. Ivory floats under its own power. It stays on top, inviting the eager hand. It is the only soap we know of which invests bathing with all the comfort and luxury to which a gentleman is entitled.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

IVORY SOAP

IT FLOATS 99⁴/₁₀₀% PURE



ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOLUME 190

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1927

NUMBER 4



Somewhere in Nevada

By C. C. WADDELL

Author of "Adventure's Price," "Double Indemnity," etc.

CHAPTER I.

GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!

QUOONAH was three days old, and already a city of fifteen thousand people—a city, if you didn't mind what you said and chose to give that title to a mere indiscriminate huddle of shacks and tents.

A week before, it had been just "somewhere in Nevada," a barren stretch of re-

mote mountainside, with no human being in sight save for two grizzled, unwashed, old desert rats plodding by with their ancient burro.

They had camped there for the night, and the next morning while doing a little desultory prospecting had managed to stumble on a lode of virgin gold. Staking out their claims, they had hurriedly loaded up a couple of sacks of ore samples for assay, and started off for Goldfield vowing

to keep their discovery a secret between them.

But when the assay report more than confirmed their belief in the richness of the find, and they saw themselves blooming out as millionaires, they could not help indulging in a little bragging. Within half an hour the wires were flashing the news far and wide, and the rush was on.

In the surge of eager gold seekers came Mickey Rado, whose smoke, for all his six months' exile in the West, still lingered over the traffic courts and dance floors of Manhattan Island, and his partner of a day, a typical cow hand who answered to the name of "Slim."

They had pushed right through without stop except at Goldfield to purchase an outfit. And so, dusty and travel stained, but with a tug of excitement in their throats, they rode into Quoonah on the third day of the camp's existence, just as the setting sun was dropping behind the peak of the bald, waterless mountain beyond.

What they saw was not especially prepossessing. It was the inception of Leadville over again, of Cripple Creek over again, of Rhyolite over again, of any new mining strike.

Noise, confusion, dust, disorder, sweat, bustle, stir. Everything under way; nothing completed. Crowds tramping helter-skelter in every direction. New arrivals constantly pouring in. Trucks piled with lumber and supplies grinding through the press, to dump their loads down anywhere and speed away for more.

A town of tents, that was being transformed into a town of shacks as fast as boards and tar paper could be nailed together. A thousand hammers were ringing, and would continue to ring throughout the night, effectually banishing sleep.

But nobody was concerned over sleep at Quoonah; that might mean missing something. A dozen new rumors were started every minute—rumors of fresh strikes; of the sale of claims at fabulous prices; of properties being jumped; of plans to bore for water, the camp's great crying need; of this, of that, and the other thing; most of them baseless in fact, but each holding

its circle of greedy listeners until the next sensation came along.

It was life in the raw—rough, primitive, shorn of all the comforts and most of the decencies of civilization. People were crowded together in haphazard fashion, without adequate sanitary arrangements, without water except what could be hauled from twenty miles away, without proper shelter from the nipping mountain air, gouged for everything they needed at extortionate prices, put to all sorts of make-shifts and inconveniences merely to subsist.

Yet no one seemed to care. Gold was all that mattered; and each man seemed to feel that to-morrow or next day perhaps fortune would be in his grasp. The crowds and the hubbub even gave a sort of holiday aspect to the place.

"Kind of reminds me of the big day at a county fair," Mickey commented, as he and Slim rode through the cluttered main street.

They found, after some searching, an unoccupied spot to unload and pitch their tent, and then hustled around to stake out a couple of claims before it got dark.

Slim, in whom the gold fever had become virulent, was itching to proceed at once with the development work on their new holdings.

But Mickey vetoed any such suggestion.

"Not me," he demurred. "If thar's gold in them hills, boy, it isn't going to run away. And, believe me, you can't spend all day in the saddle, and then swing a pick and shovel at night—not to accomplish anything.

"What I'm going to do," he announced, "is stroll around a bit to get the kinks out of my legs and give the slab the once-over, and then hole in for a real sleep. And you'd better join me. We'll make all the more headway by tackling the job fresh in the morning."

The discussion came up while they were eating supper; and Slim having finally yielded the point, they hurriedly disposed of the dishes by scrubbing them off with sand, and set out for a saunter along Main Street.

There wasn't much to see; a row of

crude, hurriedly erected dance halls and more or less under-cover gambling places, a clothing store, an assay and registry office, a newspaper plant which while waiting for the lumber for its housing was being conducted in the open, the ever present Greek restaurant, and a sprinkling of hot-dog stands, shooting galleries and similar catch-penny establishments.

The only really interesting part of the spectacle was the crowd. It filled the entire roadway, and jammed in and out of the various places of entertainment under the flaring gasoline lights. It shouted and gesticulated and whooped in a sort of hilarious delirium. Gold! Gold! Gold! It was all they talked, and all they thought of. Everybody felt rich. The bridle was off. And the whole population was out to celebrate. Every type of humanity was represented, and almost every nationality.

"Gee!" Mickey stared at the milling throngs, which were constantly being augmented by the never ceasing influx of new gold seekers. "If there's only seven-tenths of a person to the square mile in Nevada, as the statistics say, each one must have picked up his other three-tenths somewhere, and all be here."

Yet, strangely enough, considering that there was as yet no community government at Quoonah, lawlessness or even misbehavior was practically absent.

The reason was not far to find. All official control for the time being was centered in the sole person of Saul Daggett, the county sheriff. But that was enough.

Hard boiled, lank, leather-faced, with a six-gallon white hat on his head, a silver star on his breast, and two guns strapped about his waist, he paraded up and down through the crowd; and such was his reputation that a word from him—usually only a glance from his steely gray eye—was all that was required to nip any incipient outbreak.

An autocrat, not only there, but throughout his bailiwick—and come to think of it, a Nevada county is larger than many a European principality—he brooked no question of his authority. But he was a tolerant despot in a way—"liberal" is the word generally used. He did not go about

with his ear cocked for the rattle of chips, or his nose sniffing for spirituous odors. In fact, he was not averse to sitting in a friendly game of draw himself, it was said, nor to occasionally wetting his whistle with something stronger than ginger ale.

Following him into the largest of the dance halls, a place known as the Broadway Night Club, Mickey and Slim saw him pause beside the long counter above which hung a sign, "Soft Drinks Of All Kinds," and jerk his head significantly toward the shirt-sleeved servitor.

A bottle labeled "Strawberry Pop," but which in color more resembled corn whisky, was immediately placed before him; and tilting it carefully, he poured a stiff four-fingers of it into a glass, and tossed it off. Then, resting his elbow on the bar, he swept his stony gaze over the assemblage as if looking for somebody.

His eyes lingered for a moment on Mickey, with a glint of question in them. Men of his sort are apt to be intuitive; and some subtle sixth sense in him may have registered a warning that he and the dark young stranger were due to clash.

But the impression, if it existed, was not strong enough to hold his attention, for after a brief interval his cold stare moved on.

Mickey had noted that momentary scrutiny bestowed on him, but was indifferent to it. The sheriff meant nothing in his young existence. As a matter of fact, he was becoming bored and sleepy.

The night life of Quoonah to one who knew his "Roaring Forties" seemed a pretty tame business; and what little animation or spontaneity had been shown in the revels was snuffed out by the appearance of Daggett.

A few couples were fox-trotting solemnly to the discords of a low-spirited jazz band. A waddling, asthmatic hostess was perfunctorily wheezing, "Mix it up, boys! Mix it up!" A half dozen henna-tressed dance girls—genuine antiques—were dawdling about among the tables. But no one displayed any real inclination to cut loose.

"I've been to church socials that had more pep than this," growled Mickey, taking no trouble to conceal his yawns.

"Come on, Slim; let's beat it to the hay. If we want to do a heavy stunt on those claims to-morrow, we might as well—"

He broke off abruptly, and stood tense, peering like a hunting dog coming to a point.

The flimsy, calico curtain across a doorway, which led into a room where the entertainers on the program waited for their turns, had blown or been pushed aside, and beyond it Mickey saw revealed a slender girl who looked as much out of place in those surroundings as a diamond in a garbage pail.

Involuntarily his hand had clutched down on Slim's arm in a crushing grip, but he was unconscious of the latter's writhing efforts to free himself. Oblivious, heedless to everything else, he stood staring at the vision beyond the doorway.

But it lasted only a moment. Some one jerked the curtain back into place, and as the dreary fox trot came to an end the hostess rapped for attention.

"Next," she announced, "we will have Billy Jenks in some buck and wing dances; but before he comes out I'm gonna let you in on a little secret. After Billy's through we're gonna give you a special added attraction in Miss Ilsa Calder, the cow-girl songstress. Step out, deary, and let 'em see you."

In response the girl Mickey had seen beyond the curtain came out to smile shyly and bow, as the listless audience, stirred to life at the sight of the bewitching figure she made in her Western costume, burst into a thunderous round of applause.

"That's right," wheezed the hostess when she was finally able to make herself heard. "And believe me, she sings just as good as she looks. You mustn't none of you dream of leaving before you've listened to her. But first, as I told you," she added, "we're gonna have Billy Jenks. Give the boy a hand, folks. I'll say he's good."

The hostess may really have thought so, since the bold, stiff-jointed little man who came out to shuffle through his time-worn routine was her husband; but certainly nobody else could see any merit in him, and the crowd, impatient for another glimpse

of the singer, raucously urged him to cut it short and get off the earth.

One who has had experience with asthma, however, cannot be easily fazed by anything else; and the hostess knew her onions. Nobody was going to leave, she felt sure, until the "added attraction" had been presented; and the longer she could hold the crowd, the better for the house.

Therefore, heedless to the insults and even threats showered upon him, she kept luckless Billy Jenks hoofing through to the bitter end of his number. Then, in defiance of the dead silence that greeted his closing bow, motioned him to take an encore.

The crowd, tickled in spite of themselves at the effrontery of it, burst into a laugh in which Mickey started to join, but was checked by a peculiar feeling of stiffness to his face.

Speculatively he ran his fingers up over his gritty cheeks, and then gazed down at his grime-incrusted hands.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "I've got to have a wash."

"Wash?" Slim stared at him. "For the luvva mud, are you crazy? Water's selling at ten cents a short drink."

"Don't make any difference," declared Mickey. "First impressions count; and I'm not going to meet that girl looking like a sand-flea."

So, dragging his protesting partner with him, he rushed out to hunt up the water wagon, and splash away a small fortune on ablutions.

When they returned to the dance hall, his face, free of its embedded layer of alkali dust, was shining like a freshly scoured tin pan, his neck, ears and hands were scrubbed to a glowing crimson, and his wet hair was smooth and sleek as the back of a seal just out from a dip.

Slim, more thrifty, or perhaps merely less susceptible, scornfully refused to share in any such sybarite wastefulness. But when the cow-girl singer came out to do her turn, and her eyes, roving over the audience, rested approvingly on his cleanliness, Mickey felt that he was more than repaid for his outlay.

For maybe thirty seconds their glances held and interlocked; and glances can say a lot in thirty seconds, when they are the glances of young people of twenty-two. Then the girl, with visibly heightened color—not necessarily a sign of resentment—wrenched her eyes away and did not look at Mickey again.

But she was not the only one who had noted that washed face, or suspected the reason for it.

The sheriff scowled slightly as he observed that interchange of glances; and during a brief pause while the singer consulted with her accompanist, he circled swiftly around behind Mickey, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Easterner, ain't you?" he drawled.

"What do you think?" Mickey looked up with a laugh. "I'll bet you on it, and lay odds either way."

The sheriff frowned at the flippancy of the response, and somewhat ostentatiously displayed his badge.

"Mebbe you don't know that I'm sheriff here, responsible for law an' order. And when I ask a straight question, I expect a straight answer."

"But that wasn't a straight question, old dear," Mickey instructed him kindly. "Your syntax was faulty, don't you see? It was like one of those trick questions the lawyers ask sometimes, which may be answered either yes or no. If you really wanted information, a more correct form, I think, would have been: Are you an Easterner?"

"Well, I ain't no college pefessor; I'm a sheriff," growled Daggett, "and you knew what I meant all right. I guess, too, you have answered me without knowin' it. Nobody but an Easterner 'd sling all that language for nothin'. I call the turn on you for a fresh guy from New York."

"And if I am"—there was an edge to Mickey's voice—"what about it?"

"Nothin'." The sheriff eyed him darkly. "That is, nothin' now. But you watch your step, young feller, and don't try to pull nothing around here. I'm going to keep an eye on you."

"That makes it even then," Mickey shrugged; "for I am going to keep an eye

on you. Listen!" He tapped the silver star on the other's breast with his forefinger. "I have yet to learn that this gives you any privilege to browbeat or threaten a citizen peaceably attending to his own business."

"Citizen? Huh!" The sheriff snorted.

"Just that. As much a citizen of Nevada as you are." And Mickey was, too, by reason of his six months residence. "And as such you are merely my servant. So run along and roll your hoop"—he gave a careless gesture of dismissal—"and thank your luck that I'm not taking the matter seriously this time. No, not another word. The lady is going to sing, and I want to hear her."

The sheriff glared and hesitated, chewing savagely on the end of his cigar. His inclination was all to grab this impudent stranger by the scruff of the neck and boot him out of camp.

But Mickey's cool arrogance gave him pause. In a promiscuous mob like this, you couldn't tell just who you might be stacking up against; and perhaps this was somebody who had the ear of the Governor. Also, the smart Aleck unfortunately had the right of the argument.

Better go a little slow, the sheriff decided. If it was merely a bluff the fellow was putting up, there would be other times and less dubious opportunities to call it. So, swallowing his umbrage and with such an assumption of nonchalance as he could command, he moved away.

Meanwhile, the girl having ended the discussion with her accompanist, was preparing to sing.

Mickey clenched his fist, and made up his mind to take a slam at the first man who laughed. It was impossible, of course, that any one so gifted with looks could have even a halfway decent voice. The best he hoped was that she might get by; but judging from Billy Jenks and the other performers he had seen, he expected less even than mediocrity.

And then he got the surprise of his life; for with the closing bars of the introduction she broke into a simple Western ballad, and sang it so truly, and with such feeling and quality, that he realized he

was listening to one of the world's great singers.

Mickey had heard all the famed prima donnas of the opera and concert stage; but never had he been so stirred as by this glorious voice, here in a tawdry Western dance hall with its hard-faced customers and its haze of tobacco smoke hanging over the tables.

It was a dramatic soprano, strong and resonant, yet with the fresh sweetness to it of a wood-bird's carol. And the beauty of it was in no way marred by amateur gaucheries. Her poise, her sustained power, the faultless way in which she took her notes, all bespoke for the girl a thorough training.

Who was she? What was a singer of such caliber doing in a crude mining camp cabaret? What possible tie could there be between her and that low-browed, villainous looking man who acted as her accompanist?

These and a dozen other questions surged to Mickey's mind; but they were lost, drowned for the moment in the sheer delight of listening to her sing.

And the crowd about him forgot, too, for the time being, its sordid preoccupations, and, recognizing that they were in the presence of a marvel, paid her the tribute of a rapt and absolute silence.

The buzz of idle chatter stopped. The toppers ranged along the bar let their filled glasses stand untasted. Even the absorbed players at the stud and black-jack tables in the rear of the hall laid down their cards and turned to listen. While she sang, and for a full half minute afterward, there was not a disturbing sound.

Then a storm of applause broke that fairly raised the roof; and Mickey's voice could be heard above all the rest. Clapping, cheering, stamping, shouting, he led in the enthusiasm.

And the singer, bowing her acknowledgments, gave him a special smile over the heads of the crowd—a smile that seemed to say:

"It was not for these others I was singing. I was singing to you alone."

The accompanist—a fellow with a mane of black hair, and the fat, greasy repul-

siveness of a copperhead snake—turned from the piano just in time to see that smile and the answering, ecstatic light in Mickey's eyes; and he shot the young man a quick look of venomous hostility.

Slim noticed that sinister glance, and nudged his companion in the ribs.

"Say!" he muttered dryly. "Gittin' yourself kinda unpop'lar around here, ain't you? Better look out for that there piano-player. He seems to have an idee you're jumpin' his claim, or somepin like that; and he's the sort, I figger, that's handy with a knife. And the sheriff, he ain't lookin' at you none too friendly like, neither."

But Mickey only grinned fatuously at the warning. What did the enmity of the sheriff or the accompanist or the whole blooming crowd amount to? The girl had smiled at him.

He had come to Quoonah for gold, and he had struck it—richer far than he had ever dreamed. Gold in that slender throat. Gold in her lovely face. Why, the girl, he would stake his life, was pure gold all the way through.

CHAPTER II.

GYPSY BLOOD.

MICKEY RADO'S six months in Nevada—a small time eternity, as he figured it—had been spent mostly at the Circle A ranch up in the northern part of the State.

There had been a phase of novelty about it at the start, but this had speedily passed away. Under the stern tutelage of the ranch boss and the ridicule of the other punchers in the outfit he became a fair cow hand, just as a prisoner in a penitentiary may become a fair cobbler or chair-maker. His heart was never in the work. He always had that irksome feeling of doing the thing which somebody else thought was good for him, instead of following his own choice.

Restless and dissatisfied, he found nothing but boredom and monotony in the life; yet didn't quite know what was the matter with him.

"New York and Nevada have much in common," he said glumly one day in the bunk house. "They both begin with N."

"So's your old man," retorted the humorist of the outfit, pausing to blow his coffee.

And it struck Mickey that for once the meaningless repartee did hit the mark; for as it happened he and his father, Mavor Rado—of Wall Street, London, and Paris—also had corresponding initials.

Mavor Rado was exactly what you would expect a great international banker to be—dignified in appearance, rather autocratic in manner, reserved in speech, a discriminating patron of the arts. He and Mickey were both dark and slender, with coal-black eyes and hair, and glistening white teeth—the heritage of a strain of gypsy blood in their ancestry.

But the difference between them was that Mavor's dark hair was threaded with silver, Mickey's like the unflecked sheen of a raven's wing. Mavor's black eyes bored like augers; Mickey's danced with mischief. When Mavor showed his teeth it meant trouble; Mickey's were continually flashing in smiles.

Mavor Rado could settle problems involving millions of dollars and affecting the fate of nations, without turning a hair. But when it came to handling Mickey he found himself stumped.

The trouble was that he had that sense of infallibility which comes with great power. Seeking to guide and direct his son, he rode him with too tight a rein. Some colts do better when given their head.

About all he accomplished was to turn Mickey's energy and high spirits to the profit of night club proprietors and automobile repairers. So finally, at his wits' end, he had bought a Western cattle ranch, and, shipping Mickey out there, had shifted his parental responsibilities to Angus McTabb, the manager in charge.

A month had passed, two months, six. Mavor had begun to get accustomed to sleeping o' nights without being aroused by requests for bail or tidings from some hospital that the latest motor smash had resulted in nothing more serious than contusions or a broken collar bone.

Then at just about the moment—allowing for the difference in Nevada time—that Mickey was listening raptly to the singer in the Quoonah dance hall, came a telegram.

His secretary brought it into the music room of the big mansion on Long Island, where the banker sat at his hundred-thousand dollar pipe organ improvising softly on the theme of an old Hungarian melody.

"I thought you ought to see this at once, sir," he said. "It is from Nevada, from McTabb at the ranch. He says that Mickey has been missing for over a week, and intimates the possibility of foul play."

With a discordant crash from the instrument, Rado's playing ended, and he swung around on the organ bench to snatch at the message and hurriedly scan its contents.

"Curse the cheeseparing Scotchman!" he muttered. "He's made it exactly ten words. Get the ranch on long distance, Creighton." He motioned impatiently to the secretary. "And tell them to rush the call through."

But when he got McTabb on the telephone and anxiously demanded fuller details, he was able to gather little more than had been already told in that carefully compressed telegram.

Mickey, it seemed, had started for town in the ranch flivver on the preceding Friday. When he did not return by the next evening, search was instituted for him, and eventually the flivver was found wrecked in a ravine at the side of the trail, and with its seat and dashboard plentifully besprinkled with blood, but with no trace of its driver anywhere in the neighborhood.

The natural inference was that he had sustained an accident and had been picked up by some passing motorist to be cared for; but, although the locality had been combed for a radius of over fifty miles in every direction, and every outlying homestead and camp visited, no news was forthcoming of any disabled stranger.

McTabb, forced at last to the conclusion that Mickey must either have been devoured by wild beasts or else that the wrecked car was merely a ruse, and he had been done away with or kidnaped by bandits, saw nothing for it but to communi-

cate the facts to Mr. Rado and let him take such steps as seemed necessary.

The lines in the father's face grew deeper as he listened to the story; and Creighton, the secretary, observing his expression, felt that if the suggestion of bandits were true he would not like to be in their shoes. Mavor Rado, he knew, would spare neither time, money, nor effort to run them down and exact full requital for anything that had happened to his son.

Yet for a moment the banker seemed to hesitate as he rose from the telephone. He frowned uncertainly, and ran his fingers up through his thick iron-gray hair.

Then he gave a nod of quick decision.

"Have my car brought around, the roadster," he ordered curtly. "And tell the chauffeur I will drive myself."

Five minutes later he was speeding down the avenue that led from the house and out to the main highway. But he did not stick long to the traveled road. Turning off a mile or so beyond the village, he headed across the island, following a route that was little more than a confusion of rough trails through the scrub oak and sand.

Finally he reached a huddle of dingy tents and traveling vans in a clearing not far from the shores of Lake Ronkonkoma; and drawing up beside it, he sprang out of his car and strode forward.

A couple of sullen-looking men playing with a greasy pack of cards beside a smoky camp fire rose to challenge his approach; but he flung them an impatient word or two in a strange-sounding guttural, and wondering they stood back to let him pass.

Paying no further heed to them, or to other staring figures scattered about the inclosure, he pressed on toward a van larger and gaudier than the rest, which stood almost at the center of the camp.

But as he neared this he found his way determinedly barred by a young woman.

"What do you want?" she demanded under her breath.

"To see the Queen. I, too, am a Rom."

"You?" Her dark eyes glinted with ridicule as they ran over his expensive motoring coat and the glimpse of faultlessly fitting evening clothes showing underneath.

"Listen." He caught the girl's hand and hastily whispered in her ear.

Her expression changed at his words, but still she did not move out of his path. "The Queen is asleep," she muttered obstinately. "She cannot be disturbed."

Rado frowned. He was not accustomed to being crossed.

"But I tell you I must see her. I am an old friend of hers, and—"

He paused at the sound of a quavering voice from inside the van.

"What is it, Alice? Some one for me?" There was a querulous note to the tone.

"Tell him to go away. I am resting."

"You hear?" The girl spread out her hands. "She will not see you."

But Mavor Rado had not come there to be denied. Calling upon his more or less rusty fund of gypsy patter, he lifted his voice in an urgent appeal for audience.

It proved successful. As he still struggled with the uncouth, almost forgotten words, the Queen appeared in the doorway of her van—a bent, old figure with a face like wrinkled parchment, and upon whom the colorful gypsy turban and dress seemed a mockery.

"Who is it speaks to me in the Romany chiv of long ago days beside the Danube and in the Transylvania hills?"

With the aid of her stick she hobbled down the two or three steps from the van to the ground, and over toward Rado. The girl sprang forward to lend her assistance, but she waved it aside, and reaching the visitor, peered up into his face with her dim, old eyes.

"Yes; I thought I could not be mistaken." She nodded slowly. "It is a long time since we have met, *gorgio*; but Queen Dinah does not forget her friends. You are welcome."

She extended her clawlike hand, and Mavor, bowing, raised it to his lips.

"You are good to remember the old friendship, Mother Dinah," he said. "May I lay a further claim upon it, and ask you to run the cards for me? I am in trouble."

She turned to the girl standing beside her.

"The *tarok*, Alice," she ordered.

"But, grandmother," the younger woman would have dissuaded her. "it will be too much of a strain upon you. You are not strong enough to—"

"Silence!" the Queen broke in imperiously. "And do as you are bid."

Then, when the odd-shaped pack of gypsy cards was brought, she squatted down and fumblingly laid them out in three piles on the ground.

Mavor, crossing the wrinkled palm she extended to him, squatted down opposite her, and with tense lines in his face awaited the revelation.

Three times the old woman shuffled and cut the cards, and repeated the operation of laying them out, narrowly scrutinizing the result on each occasion.

"It is your son of whom you seek to know. Is it not so, *gorgio*?"

The banker could not repress a slight start at the uncanny perception she showed. He had made no mention of the purpose of his quest, had merely told her he was in trouble.

"Yes," he said huskily, "my son. What do the cards tell you of him, mother?" There was a quiver in his voice.

"I see him here"—she indicated the jack of spades with her shaking forefinger—"a dashing young *chal*, lithe, dark-haired, flashing-eyed, much as you were when I knew you first.

"There are mountains all about." She gave a wave of her hand over the layout in front of her, which somehow raised a picture of tumbled peaks against the sky, and of a road winding among them past yawning gorges and dark ravines. "He is in a car, and driving furiously. He does not know how to drive any other way. There is a danger sign at a sharp curve just ahead, but he pays no heed to it.

"Ah-h!" She drew in her breath sharply. "The car leaves the road. It somersaults twice, and crashes against the rocks. The boy is thrown out. There is blood on him. He lies still."

She paused, and shuffled the cards together as if she had finished.

"Yes, yes." Mavor gripped her wrist. "But what then? You have not told it all. Was—was he killed?"

"He is not dead, *gorgio*." She shook her head. "He was not even badly hurt. Young bones do not break so easily. He lies there a few minutes, then struggles up and gets to his feet. He limps over to the car; but it is a total wreck, and he turns away from it with a shrug and makes his way back to the road.

"Now we shall see what happened to him." She spread the cards out afresh. "He is in no condition to travel on foot, and sits there by the roadside a long while, waiting for some one to come by and pick him up. But no one passes until at last as dusk is falling there is a cloud of dust, a jingling of harness, and a band of our people, a gypsy caravan, comes into sight.

"Your boy hails them and talks to their leader. He reveals himself as of Zingari blood, of the line of Queen Narok; and they consent to carry him with them, and let him stay in their camp until he is able to travel. He is made at home with them, the women bind and dress his injuries, he has a place at the camp fire.

"And yet I see trouble, trouble. The leader of the caravan looks at him with a jealous eye. There is a maiden— But, no, she is not the one for him. He does not care for her. There is another to whom fate leads him."

Her voice faltered and broke. She passed her hand before her eyes, as if to brush away a mist.

"I can tell you no more," she mumbled. "It grows dim, dim. I am an old woman." She turned weakly to the girl, who had passed a solicitous arm about her shoulders. "Help me back to the van, Alice. I must rest."

"But just one thing more, mother," pressed Rado eagerly. "How can I confirm what you have just told me, how assure myself that it is true. Let me know where the boy is now, so that I may communicate with him. Is he still with the caravan, or—"

"Ah?" Her withered lips twisted into a smile of derision. "You show, indeed, that you are only part Rom, *gorgio*. The Rom in you drove you here to me, but the other part will not let you believe. Well, you will have my story confirmed within an

hour; but you will not communicate with your son for many a day to come.

"More of a gypsy than you, he follows the *pateran*, the gypsy trail—follows it not with the caravan, but alone—and it leads him to his *chi*, his true love, his heart's desire."

And obliged to be content with that, the banker pressed a thick roll of bills into her hand, and drove back home to find his secretary awaiting him with another telegram which had arrived in his absence.

It was from Mickey himself, and was characteristically worded:

Report of my being missing is grossly exaggerated. I know where I am, if nobody else does. I was only an ornament at the ranch, and as I am fed up on being just a rich man's son, I have gone far from the madding crows, to try and do something on my own. Don't worry, and don't try to trace me by this wire. I have filed it in passing through, and by the time you receive it, will be miles away from here.

"It came collect about half an hour ago," observed Creighton, the secretary, "and appears to have been filed at Goldfield, Nevada, yesterday, with instructions to hold until this evening."

"So I see," assented Rado. His brows contracted. "Get me the police commissioner on the wire," he directed curtly.

When the connection was effected he put in a request; and although the police commissioner hesitated a bit, it was eventually granted.

"Going to try something on his own, is he?" muttered Mavor Rado, as he hung up the receiver. "Following the gypsy *pateran*, eh? Well, unless I miss my guess, it'll lead him not to his heart's desire, but to something quite, quite different."

CHAPTER III.

THE WORLD-OLD LURE.

THE gypsy queen, whatever the occult power or trick of clairvoyance she employed, had correctly recounted Mickey's experience. He had been wrecked just as she described it, had been picked up by a roving gypsy caravan, and had

been taken by them to their camp to be looked after and have his injuries dressed.

Inside of two days he was fit as ever again; and with his usual capacity for getting into trouble had the dark eyes of the beauty of the camp following him about adoringly wherever he went.

But the eyes of pretty Natushka, Mickey realized, were not the only ones following him about.

Those of the leader of the caravan, a sulky-looking fellow to whom Natushka was already engaged, dwelled upon him with an ever more menacing glint in their depths.

Maybe if the girl had appealed to Mickey in any way, he would have given the gypsy some real cause for jealousy; but with his ardor cooled a bit by loss of blood, he failed to see a flirtation with her as worth the chance of a knife thrust.

So, with unusual discretion for him, he decided to pull his freight before matters between him and the scowling leader came to a show-down. Also, he was anxious to get back to Circle A ranch. It had never been his intention to go a.w.o.l., and he knew that by this time his continued absence must be causing alarm.

But the difficulty was to accomplish a get-away without precipitating the very climax he was seeking to avoid.

Natushka, having constituted herself his nurse and special attendant, kept hovering about him all the time; and he was pretty certain that any attempt on his part to leave would rouse her to an impassioned protest and probably start something.

"You never can tell what a Crazy Annie like that will pull," Mickey reflected uncomfortably. "And old Pain in the Face is only waiting for an excuse to get at me."

In this dilemma, however, fortune favored him.

That night a party of cow hands from a near-by branding camp rode in to look the gypsies over, and have their fortunes told; and after they had all been duly warned of the "dark man" and "fair woman" scheduled to cross their paths, somebody produced a pair of dice and started a game of craps.

Mickey of course joined in; and never was seen such unholy luck as he exhibited. Naturals followed one another in a steady stream. "Big Dick" and "Little Joe," the stumbling blocks of most shooters, proved no handicap to him. He'd make the point within a pass or two. With uncanny foresight, too, he seemed to know just when to press, and when to draw down his wagers.

One by one the gypsies gave up and dropped out of the game. The cowboys lasted longer, but gradually they also were cleaned.

In the end, only one of them, the obstinate fellow they called Slim, was left to contest Mickey's winning streak.

In a desperate effort to recoup, he laid his watch, his boots and his saddle on the board, only to see them successively added to Mickey's pile.

Finally he staked his last possession, the Miller horse he was riding.

"Read 'em and weep!" cried Mickey, and rolled out the bones for a seven.

"Well, I guess that means I gotta walk back to camp." Slim shrugged disconsolately. "Barefoot, at that."

"Not a bit of it," volunteered Mickey graciously. "It's a bum gambling house that can't stake a loser to taxi fare home. The horse will carry double, won't he? All right, then; we'll wait till we get to your camp before you need turn him over. That will save you stone bruises anyhow."

But as he hustled about to get his coat and make ready for the ride, a dark figure slid out of one of the tents and clutched him by the arm.

"You're not leaving us, *gorgio*?" whispered Natushka suspiciously. "You are surely coming back?"

Mickey laughed reassuringly.

"You don't suppose I'd trust myself to a bunch of cutthroats with all this jack on me?"

He jerked his head toward the party of cowboys as he spoke; but it was really the black-browed gypsies of the caravan to whom he referred.

Natushka, however, accepted his words at face value, and, satisfied, turned to go back into the tent.

On an impulse, Mickey jerked out of his pocket half the money he had won, and thrust it into her hands.

"Take care of this, kid, until I get back," he muttered hastily. "And if for any reason I shouldn't show up, it's yours to keep."

A minute later he was up behind Slim on the horse, and galloping away through the darkness.

"Well, I'm out of that, thank the Lord!" He drew a long breath of relief.

"What's the matter?" Slim grunted in surprise. "I thought you was one of 'em? You was right there in camp along with the rest."

"Yes," assented Mickey; "and you've seen a prairie dog and a rattlesnake, both living in the same hole, haven't you? But that doesn't mean that a prairie dog is a rattlesnake."

"No," he explained; "I'm a puncher, buddy, same's yourself."

And as if to prove it, he broke into the lugubrious refrain:

"I'm a poor, lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor, lonesome cowboy,
I'm a poor, lonesome cowboy,
And a long ways from home!"

Then he went ahead to tell of his experiences, and of the reasons which had made him so eager to detach himself from the caravan.

"Well, if you're looking for a job," suggested Slim, "we could use an extry hand right now. The boss 'll be around in the morning, and if you say so, I'll speak to him about you."

But Mickey shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he declined. "In the first place, if I've got to play around with cows, I'm well enough suited with the outfit where I belong; and, secondly, you're much too near that gypsy camp. Come morning, and it's a safe bet, this jane I'm telling you about 'll be out hunting for me. And when she does, I aim to be quite a stretch away from here."

"Ye-es," granted Slim disappointedly; "I can see how you feel, o' course. But I was kinda hoping you might stick around long enough for me to buy back my little, ole hawss. I sure do hate to part with

him. Not that he's worth so dern much; but—well, I guess, it's like most men is with their wives. I'm used to him."

There was such a plaintive note to his tone that Mickey's ready sympathy was touched.

"Listen, old-timer!" He spoke impulsively. "I don't know this country any more than a fish; and it's well worth the price of your skate and all the rest of your duffle for me to have somebody that could guide me out to the trail. S'pose you and I could fix up a deal on that basis?"

He put it that way, because he felt instinctively that Slim would stiffen and refuse an outright gift. And the generous ruse worked.

The cowboy swung around in the saddle, with a long sigh of relief.

"I'll tell a man, we kin!" he exclaimed. "You ain't just kidding, are you, brother?"

"Never more in earnest in my life," averred Mickey. "Haven't I told you I want to get clear away from this neighborhood? Well, alone and at night, I'm apt to wander around in a circle, and land right back at the gypsy camp. It's worth money to me, I tell you, to have somebody along who can steer me straight.

"What I'd like," he went on, "if it can be arranged, is to buy a horse from your outfit, and enough grub for the journey, and then have you go far enough to put me on the trail to the Circle A ranch. Do you think your foreman 'll stand for that much of a drag on him?"

"Sure, he will," Slim declared unhesitatingly. "Ain't no pikers in our bunch, and we wouldn't work with none. If you was broke, or in hard luck, you could have the stuff for nothin'; that's what we're like. And 's long as you're willin' to pay for it, why, there ain't no question."

His optimistic assertion proved well founded. On arriving at the branding camp, and explaining his necessities, Mickey found no difficulty in purchasing a serviceable horse from the extra stock on hand, and also the other supplies he required.

"Makes a pretty good load." He contemplated the pack after it was made up. "And Slim tells me, we'll have some rough

going before we get out to the trail. How would it do to leave some of this junk I've got here with you, and send over for it afterward?"

He unburdened himself as he spoke of a fur coat which he had won from the gypsy leader, and a couple of revolvers and some gold chains and bracelets which other members of the caravan had contributed; and tying them up in a bundle, left it in charge of the foreman.

Then he and his cowboy pilot started off. The going, as his companion had indicated, was difficult. There was no trail to follow; only Slim's sense of direction, aided to some extent by the stars, and by the lay of certain surrounding peaks which served him as landmarks.

Slowly, therefore, and with many detours, owing to the broken nature of the country, they made their way down from the grasslands, and out through a jumble of arid hills to an area of alkali flats and sagebrush.

It was daylight by the time they reached it; and Mickey, shifting a bit stiffly in his saddle, glanced out over the dreary prospect, lit by the rays of the rising sun. He was sleepy and sore from his night's riding; and the not yet thoroughly healed injuries he had sustained in the flivver accident were throbbing painfully.

"The purple sage, huh!" he sniffed disdainfully. "Looks more of a muckle-dun color to me."

Slim's only comment was a wave of the hand toward a line of low hummocks about ten miles ahead.

"Trail's on t'other side of that there ridge," he said briefly; "and when we reach it, I'll have earned my pay, and be quitting you. All you'll have to do is to foller the plain road back to Circle A ranch. You can't go wrong.

"Guess we'd better stop now, though," he suggested, "and breathe the hawsses a spell. We kin have breakfast while we're waiting."

He drew up, and, dismounting, got out a little alcohol stove, and began slicing bacon and mixing flapjacks.

Mickey dropped more heavily out of the saddle, and made no attempt to assist in the

preparations. To tell the truth, he was tuckered out physically, and far from chipper in spirits.

The prospect of returning to the ranch offered no especial zest to him. He had to report, of course, and relieve any fears aroused by his absence; there was nothing else to do. But his mood was much like that of a boy going back to school, after a brief, exciting vacation.

Even the appetizing odors of frying bacon and boiling coffee failed to lift the discontented cloud from his brow. He ate glumly when the time came; glumly helped clear up afterward; and at the word from Slim, glumly mounted and rode on.

Anxious evidently to finish the job and get back to his regular duties, the cowboy struck into a brisker pace; and it did not take them long to cover the distance to the low hillocks which had been indicated as their point of separation.

Finally, rounding the shoulder of a sandy elevation, they came in sight of the trail; and involuntarily both of them drew rein to stare in surprise.

As far as the eye could reach in both directions, the road was choked with hurrying travelers—a speeding procession of flivvers, buckboards, wagons, vehicles of every description, with men trooping among them horseback and afoot.

"For the love of Pete!" gasped Mickey. "What's Broadway and Forty-Second Street doing out here?"

Slim, however, had already galloped on to discover the reason for the phenomenon; and he hastily followed suit.

Together they drew up beside a motorist, who had pulled out to the edge of the road to patch up a blowout.

"What's all the shootin' about, brother?" Slim hailed him, waving an arm out toward the crowded highway. "Balloon going up somewheres, or is it the end of the world a-coming?"

The man did not interrupt his labors even to look up.

"Gosh A'mighty! You two must 'a' been doing a Rip Van Winkle back in the mountains," he grunted impatiently. "Thought everybody in the State knowed about the gold strike."

"Gold strike?" echoed Slim and Mickey in a single breath.

"Sure. A couple of prospectors, reg'lar old desert rats, run onto it out at Quoonah; and they say it's the greatest in years. Beats even the Comstock, and the Bonanza, and them old-timers.

"Durn this fool tire!" he broke off with an exasperated snarl. "Patch won't stick, and it's been holdin' me up now for more 'n half an hour."

A speculative glint had come into Mickey's eye.

"Quoonah?" he repeated. "Just about where is that, please?"

"Over beyond Goldfield." The man gave a jerk of his head. "Out toward Death Valley. 'Bout seventy-five miles from here, I figger."

All signs of weariness and fatigue had left Mickey. No longer conscious of his disabilities, he sat up straight in the saddle.

"Your road to Circle A runs east," Slim reminded him conscientiously.

"I know," grinned Mickey. "And yours runs back to the branding camp."

They exchanged questioning glances. Each saw in the other's sharpened expression a youthful thirst for adventure, a quickening to the world-old lure of the yellow metal.

Mickey's black eyes were snapping. He flung his shoulders back with a devil-may-care gesture.

"Listen!" he urged. "I've got about five hundred dollars left. What say—shall we make it a partnership proposition?"

Without another word he and Slim both turned their horses to the trail and, joining the motley procession, journeyed on—on to Quoonah, on to the Broadway Night Club, and on to the girl with the golden voice.

CHAPTER IV.

IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS.

SONG after song was demanded of the singer. It seemed as if the crowd would never grow tired of listening to her. But at last, on a promise that she would appear again later in the evening,

she was permitted to retire, and the regular dance program was resumed.

Mickey immediately pushed forward to claim the acquaintanceship which he felt her eyes and her smile had assured him. But for once he was too slow.

His approach was skillfully blocked by the portly hostess, and before he could extricate himself from behind her ample figure he had the chagrin of seeing the girl presented to the sheriff and being borne triumphantly away by him to a table which he had reserved for that purpose.

The hostess, as already stated, knew her little book, and she was not giving any disadvantage to the man who could close up her place by a mere snap of the fingers. Perhaps, too, she had been slipped a little something for that strategic move by which Mickey was cut out.

Now, as the victim of it, with a black look at her, started impulsively for the sheriff's table, she clapped a detaining hand on his arm.

"Easy, deary!" she murmured warningly. "Don't try any didoes around here, or out you go on your ear."

It was no idle threat, Mickey recognized, as, glancing around him, he saw five or six husky retainers of the establishment gathering to back it up.

"Madam," he bowed to the hostess, "I never dispute with a lady—especially when she has such convincing arguments. There will be no didoes."

"I thought you'd see it," she cackled amusedly. "And now, since I hear you've been advising some of my good customers to run along and roll their hoops, s'pose you do that little thing yourself. This ain't your night, kid."

"Again I yield to your superior judgment," Mickey responded suavely. Not for worlds would he have shown the rage that was filling him at the turn of affairs.

"Come on, Slim." He nodded to the cowboy. "With that free-handed spirit so typical of the great West, we are being offered a generous supply of air. Far be it from me to decline, lest, peradventure, we might have the gift thrust on us—or, as the lady aptly puts it, go out on our ear."

He made another mocking obeisance to the hostess and, tucking his arm in that of his companion, swaggered off toward the exit.

"Thank the Lord!" Slim drew a long breath of relief. "I never thought you would show so much sense. All I could see for it was a muss, where we'd both git so bunged up that we couldn't do a tap of work on them claims for mebbe as much as a week."

Mickey cast a glance back over his shoulder at the table where the sheriff and the accompanist, both plainly exultant at his discomfiture, sat with the girl; and then he bent closer to Slim.

"You don't really imagine I'm going to duck, do you?" he whispered scornfully. "That was just a stall I was giving Queen Marie yonder so as to gain time. Don't let me keep you, though, if you're afraid of getting your clothes rumped."

"Aw, hell!" Slim looked hurt. "You know durn well I'll stick if you do. I'm just that crazy. But whatcha calc'latin' to do?"

That was a hard question to answer; for Mickey didn't have the slightest idea himself. All he knew was that he didn't intend to let the sheriff get away with his victory, or to leave the place without having speech with the girl. But as to how he was going to accomplish his purpose, his ideas were still vague.

Then as he and Slim moved on toward the door he saw a battered old flivver pull up in front of the dance hall, and a wave of rainbow color descend from it.

"Good Lord!" He stopped with an incredulous gasp. "Am I seeing things? How the devil did they get here?"

Slim followed the direction of his startled gaze.

"It's them janes from the gypsy camp where you was, ain't it?" he questioned. "Guess they must 've heard about the gold strike, too; and nacherally they could travel faster in their cars 'n' what we did on horseback. Three of 'em," he commented. "And that cutie in front is the one what was soft on you, ain't she?"

"Natushka; yes." Mickey dropped his voice; for the girls, their gaudy draperies

fluttering and their bangles jingling, were already in the doorway.

He caught Slim by the wrist, and drew him hurriedly to one side to evade the impending encounter; and so, since the attention of the gypsies was bent upon the line of men ranged along the bar, he escaped recognition for the time being.

"We kin edge out now and make a git-away," Slim prompted, as the trio began circulating about among the tables, urging people to have their fortunes told.

He started off as he spoke, crouching down beside a couple of other men who were making their way out; but Mickey yanked him back.

"Hold on. Natushka is heading over toward the sheriff's table. Let's watch and see what happens."

He moved up the room again, following the progress of the gypsy girl, Slim reluctantly tagging at his heels; and when Natushka finally paused beside the singer the two partners were not more than a yard away.

"Shall I tell the pretty lady's fortune?" the gypsy murmured.

But the sheriff looked up, scowling at the interruption.

"Beat it, you!" he ordered roughly. "Ain't no room in this camp for you thieving fakers. On your way, I tell you."

"Oh, no, sheriff!" broke in the singer pleadingly. "I've always wanted to have my fortune told by a gypsy, and never had a chance before. Let me try it, won't you?"

"Aw, Miss Calder, she can't tell you nothin'," Daggett decried impatiently. "That's just a stall them tramps pull, so's to give 'em a chance to do their stealin'."

The accompanist chimed in with surly disapproval.

"Drop it, Ilsa," he snapped. "Can't you see the sheriff wants to be rid of those people?"

But the girl, as Mickey had expected, was not to be dissuaded. What woman can withstand the lure of a fortune teller?

"Please?" She smiled coaxingly up at Daggett. And when Ilsa Calder turned the full battery power of those blue eyes with their long, fringing lashes, on any man

—even a hard-boiled Nevada sheriff—he was lost.

"All right," he gulped unsteadily. "Go ag'in' it, if you want to waste the time. But you won't hear nothin' but a mess of bunk. I'm tellin' you."

Ilsa, though, indifferent to his warning, was eagerly fumbling in her bag for silver to cross the gypsy's palm.

But when she looked up with the little assortment of coins in her fingers, she saw extended to her, not the hand of Natushka, but the fresh washed one of Mickey Rado.

In the interval while she had been hunting for the money he had stepped forward and tapped the waiting gypsy on the shoulder.

"Gorgio!" Natushka's eyes widened joyfully at the sight of him. "You here?"

He leaned toward her and whispered rapidly in Romany—a hurried injunction to stand aside and not interfere with what he was about to do; he had a purpose in view.

Natushka hesitated, eying him uncertainly; but before she could decide whether to object or not, the singer, finishing her hunt for coins, started to lift her head, and Mickey, boldly pushing in front of the gypsy girl, thrust out his palm.

Ilsa looked from it quickly up to the dark, smiling face bent above her, and recognizing the good-looking young stranger with whom she had exchanged glances earlier in the evening, drew back with a little fluttering exclamation of surprise.

Her involuntary action attracted the attention of her two companions to the intruder, and immediately both of them jumped to their feet.

"Here! What the heck you think you are up to?" The sheriff's brow darkened ominously. "You can't butt in on no private party—not of mine, nohow."

The other man said nothing, but the look he shot at Mickey was so vicious that Slim, watching him, slipped quickly over in that direction so as to be prepared for contingencies.

Mickey, however, merely grinned at the threatening scowls bestowed on him.

"Why, sheriff," he protested, "you've got me wrong, me and a couple of vowels.

I'm not butting; I'm batting for the little gypsy girl here. If Miss Calder wants a fortune teller, why not let her have the best obtainable? Nothing too good for her, is there? Well, here I am."

The cool audacity of it took the sheriff's breath away for a moment.

"You—" he choked.

But Ilsa Calder leaned forward eagerly, her eyes shining.

"You are a gypsy, too?" she questioned. "You can really tell my fortune?"

"Ask the girl yonder." He nodded over his shoulder to Natushka. "Tell her who I am," he added in Romany.

"It is true what he says, lady," she muttered sullenly. "He can tell your fortune better than I. Why not? He is of the seed of Queen Bella, greatest prophetess of our people. All of her descendants have the gift. They see the future better than we others."

"Oh, what gorgeous luck!" Ilsa cried excitedly. "Surely, sheriff, you wouldn't try to deprive me of such a wonderful chance?"

What could poor Daggett do in the face of that? He was ready to bite nails, but one would never have guessed it from his impassive face.

"Anything you want in Quoonah is yours, little lady," he said with stiff gallantry. "Same way, if you'd ask for his hide nailed to a board."

The accompanist, meanwhile, his face distorted with rage, was mumbling expostulations in her ear; but she paid scant heed to him.

"Oh, keep still, Luigi!" She tossed her head petulantly. "It's only a bit of harmless amusement; and if the gentleman is willing to gratify my curiosity, why should I refuse?"

"Are you ready?" She turned to Mickey.

"Cross my palm with silver." He held out his hand to her once more; but when she dropped the coins she held into it, he counted out the amount from his own pocket and passed it over to Natushka, retaining for himself what had been given him.

"These," he jingled the money in his

palm, "I shall keep for luck—always." He looked meaningly into her eyes. "They have already brought me the greatest luck of my life."

She flushed under his ardent gaze, and involuntarily dropped her glance.

To cover her embarrassment, she reverted to the question of her fortune.

"I am all on pins and needles to learn what you have to tell me," she said. "How do you go about it? By reading my palm?"

"No, I shall use the *tarok*, the gypsy cards." He took the pack from Natushka as he spoke, and, deftly riffling them, threw them on the table.

"Cut them toward you," he directed, and Ilsa having complied, he laid them out in three sets, and studied the results.

"You do not belong in this country," he said abruptly. "I see here an old New England village, with spreading elm trees along a crooked street, and white houses set back in wide yards. Out of one of them, with roses clambering over its porch, I see you come on your way to church. You are in the choir, and you have a solo to sing that morning. Since it is summer and the doors are open, your voice carries to the outside.

"A very dark, enormously fat old woman comes driving by," he went on. "She has been a famous prima donna, but her day is over and she is the victim of an incurable heart affection, so seeking rest and quiet for her last days, she has come to this remote village and taken a place on its outskirts.

"She hears you singing, and stops to listen. She waits until you come out, and then calls you to her. She tells you that you have golden capabilities, but must have training, and offers to take you in charge and teach you herself. You object that you cannot afford it, and she says she will gladly undertake your tuition free of charge. It will give her an interest in life and provide occupation for her empty days."

The girl gave a little gasp of wonderment.

"She was an angel, Mme. Buno," she murmured. "All that I may ever hope to be, I owe to her.

"But how did you know all this?" she

broke off, gazing at him with wide, startled eyes.

"I see it there in the cards." He waved his hand toward the layout on the table. "And I see much more. I see the death of madam, the prima donna, and also of your parents. You are all alone in the world, and, eager to advance your career, do not know which way to turn.

"Then"—he paused and studied the cards anew—"the son of the old prima donna proposes to look out for your interests. He has always been a sore trial to his mother, and has run through practically everything she possessed; but he persuades you to turn the little property left you by your parents into cash, saying that he will add an equal amount to it, and thus finance your ambitions. According to this arrangement, he is to share equally in your earnings and draw a salary as your manager besides.

"But," said Mickey, "he lied to you. He did not put up the money himself, as he claimed. Instead, he went around to the people of the village who loved and believed in you, and raised a fund which, as your manager, he has obligated you to pay back."

The accompanist who had been sprawled out over the table, with his venomous eyes fastened on Mickey as he listened to the recital, suddenly reared up, a twisted, murderous expression on his bloated face.

His hand shot to the back of his collar, and there was the flash of a steel stiletto in the air.

But viper stroke aimed at Mickey did not reach its mark. Slim, standing just behind the man, gripped down on his shoulder just as the knife was thrown, and the weapon, flying out of the fellow's hand, did a curious flip-flop in the air and fell point downward to transfix three cards and stick quivering in the table.

Ilsa shrank back with a scream, covering her eyes with her hands; but Mickey coolly reached over to jerk the dagger free and remove the cards from it.

Nobody saw the deft sleight of hand by which he substituted three other cards for those actually impaled upon the slender blade. To those watching, it seemed as if he picked them off the stiletto.

Dramatically he threw them down one by one on the table, face up. First, the king of spades; then the ace of spades; then the two of spades.

Fixing an eye upon his assailant, still stoutly held by Slim, he pointed with his forefinger to the king.

"That means you," he said, "dark-haired and swarthy. And this," indicating the ace, "means death. The two-spot means that it will come to you within a two—two days, two weeks, or two months, I cannot say."

Luigi at the prophecy turned livid with fear and stared despairing at the three fateful cards. Then, with a shudder, he slumped down, his head huddled in his arms on the edge of the table.

"What shall I do with him?" Slim glanced across at the sheriff.

The latter, who had not shifted his position throughout the exciting interlude, flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"That's up to you, Mr. Easterner, I guess," he drawled. "Want to make a complaint ag'in' him?"

There was an ironic note in the question that told Mickey he would gain little satisfaction by appealing to the law. The law in Quoonah was Sheriff Daggett, and his sympathies were evidently more with the other side.

"Let him go, Slim," Mickey therefore directed curtly. "I don't need to call in any help to protect myself from vermin like that." And as he spoke, he contemptuously flung down the stiletto on the table, and again picked up the cards.

"Now, Miss Calder," he said, "if you will cut again, I'll finish telling your fortune. Or perhaps"—a suggestion struck him—"you'd prefer more private surroundings, where everybody can't hear what I tell you, and where we won't be so subject to interruptions.

"How about that place yonder?" He jerked his head toward the side room with the calico curtains across the doorway, in which he had first seen her.

Then, as she assented to the proposal, he turned to the sheriff.

"You'll excuse us, won't you, sheriff?"

"Don't know as 'twould make much dif-

ference if I didn't," grunted Daggett. "You seem to be runnin' things to suit yourself. Don't forget, though, that them laughs best, who laughs last."

An apt retort sprang to Mickey's lips, but he choked it back. After all, the sheriff was a power here, and there was small sense in increasing his already active enmity.

So, instead of answering, he busied himself in drawing back Ilsa's chair and assisting her up from the table.

As they rose, the head of Luigi, the accompanist, lifted, too, from his crouching arms, and he stared again shiveringly at the three black cards still lying on the table.

Then his eye caught sight of the gleaming dagger, and shifted quickly to the dark head of Mickey as he escorted the girl across the room.

He glanced from it back once more to the king of spades, and an inspiration seized him.

Snatching up the stiletto, he sprang to his feet, and flung himself at Mickey.

"You fool!" he shouted. "You're as dark as I am, and that king of spades was meant for you, not me!"

CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING FOR HIS GRANDCHILDREN.

SLIM, regarding Luigi as no longer dangerous, had strolled away to watch one of the card games. Mickey, engrossed with Ilsa, was paying no heed to anything else.

The sheriff, hunched down in his chair and nursing his pique, could not have got to his feet in time to interfere even if he wanted to.

So there seemed nothing to balk the fellow's vindictive attack, as with dagger upraised he sprang across the floor to get Mickey. The two or three persons in his path dodged aside, involuntarily giving right of way to the menacing figure.

But the gypsy girl, Natushka, had seen Luigi snatch up the stiletto from the table; and realizing his purpose as he lunged forward, she voiced a quick cry of warning.

"Gorgio!" she screamed. "Look out! Behind you!"

Mickey whirled like a flash—just in time to clutch Luigi by the wrist and ward aside the descending stroke which otherwise would have been planted between his shoulder blades.

But unfortunately Natushka did not content herself with merely apprising him of his peril.

At the same time she screamed she seized a heavy bottle standing on the table and flung it with all her force. With a woman's proverbial aim she failed to hit Luigi, at whom she had thrown it, and got Mickey instead.

It caught him a glancing blow on the side of the head just as he grasped his assailant's arm—not enough to knock him out, but sufficient to daze him momentarily and throw him off his balance.

He went down under it, and still maintaining his grip on Luigi's wrist, dragged him along.

They hit the floor with a crash, Luigi on top; and what little breath remained in Mickey's body was knocked out of him by the impact.

Faint and dizzy, he felt his muscles relaxing, yet with the last vestige of his strength he held his clutch on the arm that held the dagger.

Luigi strove desperately to wrest it free, so as to give a *coup de grace*; then finding his efforts unavailing, began trying to bend Mickey's arm inward and drive the point of the stiletto into his throat.

Nearer and nearer it came until it was not more than an inch away from his jugular vein. Mickey's power of resistance was practically gone. He saw the dark face of his adversary above him light up with triumph.

Around him he saw as through a haze the ring of crowding spectators. No use to look for any assistance from them. Both men were strangers to them; there was only the vaguest idea as to what the trouble was about. No one felt called upon to interfere. On the other hand, self-appointed fugelmen were holding back Slim and Natushka, and shouting noisily:

"Let them fight it out! Let them fight it out!"

The bloody spirit of the old Roman

amphitheater was rampant. That jostling cordon about him was as unconcerned with the outcome as if they had been watching a dog fight between two strange curs. Avid for thrills, they wanted to see it made a battle to the death, and would have angrily turned thumbs down on any attempt to stop it, or to succor either of the antagonists.

The dagger point was thrusting closer and closer to Mickey's throat. The weight of Luigi's pressing upon him felt like a ton. He knew that the grip of his fingers upon the fellow's wrist was weakening. A cold despair seized him. In another moment—

Then, just in the nick of time, came a diversion. Ilsa Calder burst through the whooping, close-packed mob and, grabbing up the bottle which had been thrown so disastrously by Natushka, and which had fallen unbroken to the floor after striking Mickey, she began belaboring Luigi fiercely with it.

Two or three men stepped out to stop her in the interest of so-called fair play; but they quickly desisted at an authoritative command from the sheriff.

He had been standing at one side of the ring impassively watching the struggle, his hands resting idly on the butts of his heavy revolvers; but now he had both guns out, and his gray eyes flashed a challenge to any one who dared defy him.

"Hands off, there!" he barked gruffly. "I'll put daylight through the fust man 't lays a finger on her!"

Then with a slight quizzical touch, he added: "She ain't really makin' no difference nohow, gents, so fur as the merits of the contest is concerned."

This was to a large extent true. She had neither the strength of arm nor the composure to wield her improvised weapon effectively. The blows she rained so frenziedly at Luigi landed for the most part on his padded shoulders where they did but little harm.

Nevertheless, they served to distract and confuse him. Involuntarily he raised up and twitched away from them, instead of concentrating all his attention upon his adversary, and pressing home the advantage he held.

It gave Mickey a moment's respite—long enough for the fogs to clear away from his brain and for him to regain his wind. Like magic, he snapped out of the numbed helplessness that had lain upon him into a full control of all his faculties.

And when Mickey was himself, fat, mushy Luigi was of course no sort of match for him.

Jerking up his knee, he drove the point of it into his opponent's midriff with a force that brought a quivering yelp of pain from Luigi's lips, and turned his face to a pasty yellow.

At the same instant Mickey surged up with his shoulders to fling off the other's weight on him, and levering on his hips, rolled Luigi over and brought himself on top.

An easy matter then to slam the arm which had menaced him with the stiletto over to the floor, and as it lay outstretched to twist the weapon out of Luigi's fingers. With that, the battle was over; and Mickey, rising to his feet, began nonchalantly brushing off his clothes.

The crowd plainly showed its disappointment. They wanted to see Mickey cave in the ribs of his worsted foe, knock out his teeth, and pound and stamp him into a jelly, just as a minute or two before they had wanted to see Luigi stab Mickey into the semblance of a Swiss cheese. They felt cheated of their proper entertainment.

"Whyn't you smear him?" they booed. "What's the matter with you? Too proud to fight?"

"Sorry, gentlemen." Mickey grinned at them. "But I've just spent six dollars on a wash-up, and I can't afford to dirty my hands any further on vermin like that. Here, you!" He snapped the slender blade of the stiletto in two and disdainfully cast the pieces down to Luigi, who was still writhing on the floor from the effects of that knee jolt to the solar plexus. "Take your little frog-sticker and beat it before I change my mind and give you the hiding you deserve.

"And remember," he called, as Luigi, prompt to take the hint, scuttled waveringly toward the front door, "if you ever try

this on again, or if you even look cross-eyed at me, I'll just naturally break you in two and make frankfurters out of you."

Then, as the crowd jeeringly followed his discomfited adversary, he turned to Ilsa Calder and caught both her hands in his.

"It was you who really saved my life," he murmured glowingly. "No one else but you lent me a hand, and you came just when I needed help the most."

His voice was low, caressing; but Natushka, standing close behind him, overheard the speech and her somber eyes kindled with resentment.

Not a word of appreciation for her, who by her cry of warning had delivered him from the stroke of the assassin's dagger. All his gratitude was for this milk-faced singer whose futile pummeling, so far as Natushka could see, had not affected the result at all.

But Mickey, all unconscious of the storm he had stirred, was going on.

"It was probably some friend of Luigi's who chucked this at me," he said, picking up the bottle which had played such an important part in the affair; "but on account of the splendid use you put it to, I am going to preserve it as a sacred relic. I'll show it to my grandchildren, and tell them—well, I'll tell them what their grandmother did with it out in the wild and woolly West."

Ilsa gave a startled gasp.

"Aren't you taking a good deal for granted?" she stammered, blushing.

"Not a bit of it," he declared. "You can't help it, and neither can I. It's written in the stars, told in the cards. That's the reason I wanted to finish reading your fortune where no one else was around. Come on now, and I'll show you how plainly the cards reveal it."

He caught her hand and drew her with him into the room behind the calico curtains.

The gypsy girl stood glowering after them a minute, then, as a spasm of jealous rage contorted her features, she spat between her two fingers at the spot where the two had been, and muttering a Romany curse under her breath, stalked out of the dance hall.

Meanwhile, Mickey, with the cards laid out before him on a barrel head, was explaining to Ilsa how her future was disclosed by the position and associations of the queen of hearts, which he said represented her.

"Here, you see, she is in a strange place." He pointed to a sequence of clubs, spades and diamonds that surrounded the queen. "And from the preponderance of spades, I should say the place must be Quoonah."

"In this place you are not what you appear to be," he went on, studying the cards with a puzzled frown. "You are acting a part, I should say, although it is for an honorable purpose."

"Still, I don't exactly get this." He shook his head. "There is crookedness and lying and double dealing all through the picture, and it is closely associated with you." He paused and scanned the combination of cards, as if stumped for a solution.

"Oh, I see it now!" His brow suddenly cleared. "You are not only deceiving, but are yourself deceived. The difference is that your deception is innocent, while the one being practiced on you is a cheating swindle."

"You are under an evil influence." He indicated the king of spades in close juxtaposition to her card. "No need to tell you who it is, I guess. But you ought to know that that fat scoundrel is working a game you don't even suspect, and that is apt to get you into a peck of trouble."

"You mean that business," she broke in, "of raising money from the folks back home, and passing it off as his own contribution to our partnership?"

"No. This is something else—a black, treacherous scheme that he is carrying on at the present time. You take my advice, girl, and ditch that wop without losing any time about it. You think he is furthering your hopes for a career; but you were never more mistaken in your life. Where you ought to be with that voice of yours is in New York, not singing out here in mining camp dumps. It's ridiculous."

"There is trouble all around you." He waved his hand over the spread of cards.

"Disappointment, loss, grave physical dangers, even the possibility of disgrace. And it all leads from the same source, this scabby king of spades. Get rid of him, Ilsa, I beg of you."

But she did not seem especially impressed.

"I think your prejudice is speaking now, more than the cards." She laughed skeptically. "And I have no illusions in regard to Luigi, either. I know just how tricky and dishonest he is; but on the other hand, I can't conceive of any such dangers coming from our association as you suggest."

"I am not exactly a half wit," she lifted her head a shade defiantly; "and, believe me, Luigi is not putting anything over on me. You don't understand the circumstances, you see. I know quite well what I am doing, though; and Luigi is too useful to me just at present to be dispensed with. I've got to have a manager, a representative of some sort; and where else would I find one?"

"All right." Mickey shrugged. "You know your own business, I suppose. But don't say afterward that I didn't warn you."

He hesitated a moment; then, gathering up the cards, shuffled them anew, and held them out to her to cut.

"I have told you the past and the present," he said. "Now, I am going to read your future."

Again he spread the cards out, fan shaped, on the barrel top and gave them serious scrutiny.

"Ambition," he said, "is the ruling passion of your mind. Hitherto, all your thoughts, all your efforts have been centered on the one aim, success."

"But now"—he laid a finger on the king of hearts, which had not before appeared

in the spread of the cards—"a new element has come into your life, and that is love."

"It frightened you. You have always put the thought of such a thing away from you. Love and marriage was not for you, you told yourself; you were wedded to your career. And now that love has swept suddenly into your heart, you would drive it out, if you could. You are afraid that it will interfere with your plans for success."

"But," he laughed triumphantly, "love, all-conquering, will not be denied. I see here in the cards a wedding ring, the symbol of your surrender. I see a long journey with the man of your choice; and at the end of it, I see through that very love which you would now repel, the fruition of all your ambitions, hopes, and dreams."

"Look!" He pointed to the cards. "Here is a great auditorium filled with cheering people who are paying tribute to your genius. It is your night of victory."

He leaned toward her over the cards, and looked into her face, flushed and glowing at the picture he had painted.

"So that is why," he said softly, "I shall tell my grandchildren the story of how their grandmother saved my life in a Western dance hall. It is so written in the cards, and must come true."

Perhaps? But if an unprejudiced observer had happened to espy Luigi lurking outside, glaring through a knot hole in the board wall as he listened to the interchange between the two; or had seen the sheriff fingering his guns, as he leaned against the corner of the bar and stared with jealous gaze at that curtained doorway; or had observed Natushka sharpening a knife on a stone as she muttered black, gypsy curses—well, that unprejudiced observer would probably have laid odds against Mickey's living long enough to have grandchildren, or even to see to-morrow's sun.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



LOOK OVER THE FIELD

and you will find that nowhere else can you obtain the value in assorted fiction that ARGOSY-ALLSTORY gives you. Just think of it! Fifty-two books of sterling worth a year out of its serials alone. No wonder its circulation extends around the world.



Kerry of the Air Mail

By JOE WEIL

A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

THE wind whistled over the Jersey meadows, sweeping a curtain of snow in its chilly blast. It looked like the beginning of a blizzard, and it portended nasty hours ahead for the air mail flyers.

But it is a well known fact that "wind nor storm nor gloom of night" has failed to keep the couriers of Uncle Sam's post office service from the swift completion of their appointed rounds. And that goes for the young, red-blooded, adventure-loving fellows who spin the mail across the three thousand miles of air line from coast to coast in thirty hours.

The wind was certainly here, and in good measure. As for the storm and the gloom, they could not have been thicker if manufactured for a movie shot.

In the flood lights that swept over the New Brunswick air mail port one could see that the "wind nor storm nor gloom of night" line was more, much more, than a mere slogan, for the roar of an airplane engine, warming up, added its basso

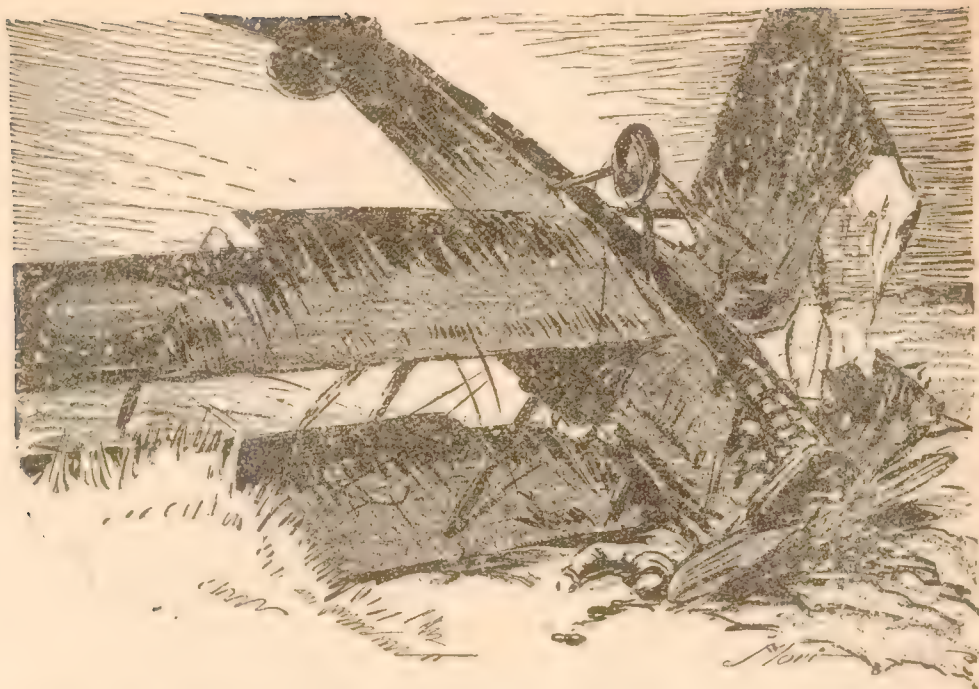
to the shrill tenor of the wind. Its deep-throated note came booming across the field to a shed, and one of the assistants consulted his watch—it showed a few minutes to ten o'clock—and picked up the final mail bag.

He shouldered it, plowed through the shallow snow to the plane, and dumped his burden into the cockpit. Already a mechanic was hurrying toward the office to notify the pilot. The Chicago mail was ready to "hop."

In the office Glenn Kerry was bundling himself up in readiness for his eight-hour battle with the elements. Kerry was a splendid type of pilot, just turned thirty.

If there is such a thing as being a little too handsome for a male, most persons would have called him guilty of this. Some actually did.

Except for the clean, manly jaw line, his face looked younger than his thirty years, and certainly the gray-blue eyes were the eyes of an adventurous, and even mis-



chievous, boy, but beneath his tunic was the heart of a man, and Glenn Kerry had not excited the jealousy among his associates that many an equally good looking man might have done. He was popular in the air mail service.

It had been that way, also, in the war, where he had made an enviable record that had heaped a few medals on his chest and numerous German planes on the ground. The war had offered him a happy relief from his engineering course. It also came at a most opportune period, removing as it did the necessity of concentrating on the thought of what he would do when he got out into the world.

Kerry stopped thinking about that question for three years, and then, when he found himself removing his uniform for the last time, he suddenly had the dismal realization that he faced rather a tame future. Blue prints are not dazzling sights for the average man, and surely they present no greater glitter for an ex-ace.

The lure of the air could not be denied. The pounding of the explosions of twelve cylinders in his ears was music that lulled Glenn Kerry to happiness. He never realized how much flying had seeped into his

blood until he found himself out of the army with no ship to fly.

He managed to live through six full weeks of renewed acquaintances and humdrum civil life. Then came the air mail suggestion. It took him two more dreary months before he made the proper connections, but finally, like the ambitious young man in the correspondence school advertisement, he "got the job!"

The uniform was different, but the ships were the same, and what mattered the mail in the front cockpit so long as it got to its destination on time? A ship is a ship, and the air is the air, and a ship in the air—the sweep of the wind—the clouds—the earth spinning by below!

Many men would define contentment in many ways. But this was contentment for Glenn Kerry.

Here were thrills paired with the obvious necessity of making a living. The work had not palled for a moment during his months of service. The war hawk had become a carrier pigeon.

There was no black-crossed prey to swoop down upon and send his pulses racing; but many a night had given him a welcome zest of battle with the elements to

get his mail cargo through. This, in Glenn Kerry's opinion, was living; and living is always intense so near to death.

Of late a new excitement had crept into his work; something was going wrong with the planes. A series of accidents following closely on each other had ended the lives of three dauntless men.

Another pilot was lying in a coma in a hospital, beyond hope of recovery, and four planes that had skimmed through the ether like joyous birds had been reduced to little more than junk. And all this after two years of air mail service without a single fatality.

The investigation disclosed nothing, but there was a sinister feeling of foreboding hanging over the boys who "gave 'er the gun." It was very queer, to say the least, four smash-ups in such a brief period, but the only men who might have told what happened were gone.

The pilots could not rid the thought from their minds. It preyed upon them. It caused all sorts of conjectures.

The mechanics cursed and fumed. They were blamed for the wrecks. "Something" had gone wrong—just what it was nobody knew. But suspicion naturally pointed to lax inspection by the mechanics, and the latter were furious in their inability to stave off the succession of crack-ups.

Kerry finished a cigarette, and drew on his gloves in the warmth of the office. Bannister, one of the more talkative of the mechanics, was in a discussion with some of the "gang" who sat before the cherry-red stove.

Bannister's voice, trained to be heard above the roar of motors, was loud enough for Kerry to hear what he was saying. It was not a comfortable piece of news for a man on the verge of hopping off into the trackless night and storm.

"Poor Jimmy!" Bannister was saying. "He was in a Sheldon ship, too. Marron just phoned in the news. Those Sheldons are hoodooed, I tell you. That makes five down—and every one a Sheldon."

"And what's that about Jimmy?" Kerry asked. "You mean Jimmy Black?"

"Yes. Killed."

There was a serious look on the hand-

some face of Glenn Kerry. Poor Jimmy Black! A good pilot and a good scout.

He threw away his cigarette as the door opened and the mechanic brought the information that his ship was warmed up and ready to hop. As he started out of the building he heard Bannister's voice: "Well, it must be a hoodoo—unless somebody's monkeyin' with the busses! It's a great ship, and I'm willing to stake my life in one of them."

That was what Glenn Kerry was doing this night. He walked swiftly across the field toward his plane.

Despite the bitterness of the weather, the superintendent and several mechanics were grouped about the plane. The ship itself was no novelty to these hardened veterans, but they were centering their attention on the new Stedman radio set.

Garvin, the superintendent, had already gone over the new device with Kerry, and now was repeating the information to the group about him. They showed the intense interest of the mechanically inclined; they seemed to forget the cutting wind as they watched Garvin demonstrate, working the throw lever so that it pointed to "Receiving" and then to "Sending" on the dial.

"But don't you think it would be better to have the older apparatus on, too, for safety?" asked one of the men. "Then if this didn't work—"

"It 'll work, all right," cut in Garvin, promptly. "The tests are still going along without a hitch. The old way was too slow. If we'd had Jimmy Black's ship equipped with this, he might at least have hollered something into the tube before he crashed.

"Keep in touch with us if you can," he instructed, turning to Kerry, "and try to forget about this latest crash."

Kerry was adjusting the receivers and a speaking tube over his helmet. "I've forgotten all about crashes—long ago," he answered, quietly.

A few minutes later he took off in the teeth of the storm. Beneath him, as he zoomed along, men and women were preparing to retire between thick blankets in soft beds, in heated rooms.

Some sat smugly before radio sets—parts of the entertainment coming to them he

heard himself as he made adjustments on his dial. Others were getting their thrills vicariously in comfortable playhouses or cinema temples.

That was perfectly all right for folks like them. But there was a smile of zestful delight on the face of Glenn Kerry as he checked up his bearings and headed for Chicago. At nine o'clock to-morrow morning business men would sit at their desks in the Lake City and open mail that had been posted in New York the night before.

Most of them would never even hear the name of Glenn Kerry, now hurtling through the wind and storm and gloom of night. If, from a casual glance at the air mail stamp, they ever paused to think of the unknown pilot who winged along, they might have wondered why men picked such hazardous professions. Not for them, a game like that.

But their possible puzzlement over an air mail pilot's choice of a profession could be no greater than that of Glenn Kerry as he flew on and wondered why men could shut themselves up most of the day in stuffy, steam-heated offices.

Glenn Kerry did a great deal of thinking, usually, as he tore along through the night. He had eight hours to think, up there alone. Just at present he was thinking of the latest air fatality.

Well, he'd bet that Jimmy Black had met death unafraid. Funny about all those Sheldon crack-ups, though. His mind turned to the Sheldon planes, and then to Betty Sheldon, the daughter of the builder.

It was something new for Glenn Kerry to be thinking about girls. But then girls were just girls, and Betty Sheldon was—well, Betty Sheldon.

You see, in this respect, he was no different from thousands of other young men—the girls they idealized were always the ones who had a monopoly on good looks, and Miss Atlantic City figures, and sweet dispositions and brains. Kerry himself had heard fellow pilots rave about charming young females, but usually a sight of them had been disappointing. Their beauty was chiefly in the eye of the infatuated beholder.

Kerry seldom shared their opinions. And a good thing, too, perhaps, for many of

them might have lost their girls if Glenn Kerry had been interested. But Glenn Kerry never knew that.

He was too modest for such thoughts about himself. He had even been too backward to speak to Betty Sheldon that day she visited the field and talked freely with the mechanics working on the Sheldon plane. But he kept thinking about her, up here in the air.

The lights of Bellefonte came into view. Romance fled from his mind for the moment. He recalled Garvin's instructions, and turned to his radio set and adjusted it.

"Kerry talking," he spoke into the tube. "Passing over Bellefonte now. Ship fine."

Then he turned the dial to "Receiving." He waited a minute.

"O K," came the voice of Garvin, the superintendent. "Good luck, Kerry, old boy. Keep in touch."

"Great invention," smiled Kerry to himself. "This is what I call all the comforts of home."

The roar of the motor came musically to his ears. He peered down. He was approaching the town of Avalon.

The great, lighted building of the Trico Aircraft Corporation was beneath him. It recalled to his mind the day when he applied there for a job as test pilot, and his disappointment when he was informed that the company was going into insolvency and was discharging the employees.

It had seemed tough luck to him then, but right now he congratulated himself. If he'd landed that Trico job, he'd never have been at liberty for his present job—and then probably he'd never have seen Betty Sheldon.

The lights of Avalon were receding now. The wind had toned down a little, but it was still snowing. "But wind or storm—"

He recited the post office slogan in unison with the pounding of the cylinders. He was doing close to a hundred miles an hour. He looked at his radium-dialed wrist watch. A little ahead of scheduled time. Everything fine!

II.

If Glenn Kerry, however, could have heard what was being said in the offices

of the Trica Aircraft Corporation which he had just passed over, he might not have thought that everything was so fine. He would have heard the name of Sheldon repeated, and the gist of the conversation would have surprised him.

In the private office of Philip Hatton, president of the Trico Corporation, three men were sitting about a flat topped desk. The dark man at one side of the desk, Hatton himself, might have been called handsome in a sleek, over-barbered way.

His jaw was a little too heavy, bespeaking brutality as well as determination, and the eyes were cold, bright, merciless. He smiled frequently as he talked to the men opposite him, and displayed a set of well kept teeth.

In fact, this was the principal exposure of the smile. The eyes never warmed up. Philip Hatton, once a rum-runner on a large scale, had never found that warmth paid. His thin face was wolfish as he smiled at the younger man opposite him.

"Well, if Mr. Weimar says you're all right, that goes," he said. "Have a drink?" He opened a drawer in his desk and drew out a tall bottle.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Hatton, I won't. Bad diet for a pilot."

"I don't mind," returned Hatton, crisply. "Well, you're no pilot, Weimar. Here!"

He shoved over the bottle, and Weimar, a stoutish, shifty-eyed man, took it with a grin and poured himself a drink. Hatton also helped himself.

"Now," he said to the younger man as he drew out a pad and pencil, "give me a history of your experience in the air."

The young man did so. Hatton made swift notes. Once in awhile he raised his coldly luminous eyes and glanced appraisingly at the young man. Finally he put down his pencil.

"Your air record's all right," he said. "We'll check up everything, of course. Willing to take chances?"

The young man smiled. "I've been taking chances all my life," he replied. "Otherwise I'd never have picked the air game."

Hatton studied the other's face again, started as if to say something, then changed his mind. "You know how to do as you're told?"

"I've been in the army."

"How are you on keeping your mouth shut?" was the blunt question.

"I'm not very fond of talking."

"Good. Talking never made any one fat. Well, Carson, Mr. Weimar here will be in touch with you within a week. I have a little conference on with Mr. Weimar, but my car and chauffeur's outside, and I'll have you taken to the station. Don't take any other job until you hear from us. It may be worth your while to wait."

He stood up, reached over and shook hands, and accompanied the applicant out to the car. He stood in the doorway and waited until the limousine had turned out through the gate. Then he reëntered the office, hugged the radiator for a moment, and turned to Weimar.

"I wanted to see that bird off the place," he said. "Joe'll be back with the car soon, and we'll drop over to Blossom's new night club. I'm not taking chances with any one until I know him, or have something on him. You think he's all right? Safe?"

"Well," Weimar replied, "he's a crackerjack flyer, and I'm sure he can be handled. He's a daredevil, he's discontented, like so many ex-service men—and he needs dough badly. Fair combination."

"Seems a little mealy-mouthed. We'll go slow with him. And now about that other business. No doubt about it, is there?" he asked.

Weimar looked up. "None at all. Corfield wired, in code, of course."

"How about the pilot?"

"Don't worry about him—Black, I think it was. He's where he'll never blab. Dead men tell no tales."

"You know it!" said Hatton grimly.

He looked at the other meaningly. Weimar had been in the rum-running business with Hatton. He knew what that glance meant.

There were two men in Chicago who would not tell any tales. But they had to be bumped off, through a hired gangster; otherwise he and Phil Hatton would have been dressed in stripes right now, instead of in the well-fitting clothes they wore.

As it was, he and Hatton had found it expedient to leave a profitable field in Chicago. Hatton, with the keenness that is often the running mate of complete lack of conscience, had been tipped off to the situation in the nearly bankrupt Trico Corporation. There had been a reorganization, with Hatton in control.

Hatton poured himself another drink.

"Well," he said to Weimar, "I got some more dope on Sheldon's new ship. His own son is making a test for speed late next week—they're pulling it at night to cover everything, and think it's all secret. But little Phil here got wise."

"How do you do it?" asked the other admiringly.

Hatton grinned. "Remember the girl I was helping into the car that afternoon at the air carnival out in Norton Field?"

"I remember. Swell looker. Some broad."

"That was no broad," retorted Hatton.

"That was Miss Betty Sheldon. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Phil! It's not—it's not—"

"The hell it's not! Miss Betty Sheldon, daughter of old man Sheldon—that's who it is. She was asking a mechanic something about an engine. He was a kind of a dub. Your old pal here took the liberty to give her a little info on the engine. It's easy to talk to a dame on her hobby, and I put on the ritz a good deal. I've done the same thing with swell dames out at the track—talked horse to women that like to see 'em run. Well, Mason happened along; he had a couple of shops in the carnival. He introduced us, and when she learned who I was she fell hard. I call at the house now."

"I got to hand it to you, Phil. You always pulled strong with the ladies."

Hatton did not deny it. He sat there with a fatuous smile on his face.

"I'll pull stronger yet," he predicted—"when this business is over with. Now, see if you can line up this fellow Carson. Go into big dough, if necessary, but be careful. We've got to get old Sheldon out of this game. He's too inventive. I'm afraid of that new ship of his. If Sheldon enters that in the transcontinental race, I

wouldn't give a dime for our chances. We have got to break his heart—get him out. If we don't, it means that some one's bungled. And whoever does that answers to me!"

"I was reading," said Weimar, "that the prize money had been raised to thirty-five thousand dollars."

Hatton snapped his fingers.

"Thirty-five thousand dollars! Breakfast money! I wouldn't mind losing that. But the plane that wins—don't you see? Big orders for the victor plane. The Corliss Aero people are holding one of their biggest orders until they see who's the winner of this race. Now, we got to be on our toes, Weimar. If we make enough dough, that Chicago business can be squared forever. I don't want that hanging over me. I want to get in with a new bunch, be a regular guy."

"Sheldon was a pretty big man once," said Weimar dubiously. "Might not do to go too fast, Phil. He might have some powerful friends left. I'm not hankering to get the works in this thing."

"Big or little, he's got to be put out of the game!" Hatton insisted fiercely. "This is war—commercial war. Anything goes. I won't be stopped. Halsey was a big man too, wasn't he? Where's he? In Joliet, ain't he? Where's Cruze? In Sing Sing, ain't he? Where's Lewis? The dirty rat! In his grave, ain't he? And where's Phil Hatton? Right here, ain't I? Look pretty well, don't I? Dressed kinda nifty, ain't I?" Hatton's eyes were cruelly bright, and he was lapsing into the argot of his kind.

"You stick with me, Weimar, and do as I say, and don't get yallah. If we win that race, we'll put on a big stock-selling plan. But we've got to crash that Sheldon ship. There can't be any suspicion of me. I'm not supposed to be in it at all. In fact, I pull pretty strong with old man Sheldon himself. When he's out we can make our entries at the last minute. I can even keep friends with him. Get me?"

III.

HAVE you ever heard of a busman's holiday? The expression comes originally

from London, which has the most complete omnibus system in the world. When the conductors or drivers of the London omnibuses have a day off, Londoners will tell you, they frequently spend it in taking a bus ride about the city, just as if they did not get enough bus riding during working hours.

Of course, the Londoners may be spoofing, you know. Their statement may be a first cousin jest to our American one that when a postman has a holiday he goes for a long walk. And yet, in all seriousness, men of many professions spend their spare time close to their work.

It is a well-known fact that actors at liberty like to see shows; that newspaper men hang around the city rooms of newspapers; and that aviators, who make a living piloting planes, can find no better off-duty sport than piloting planes. And Glenn Kerry was no exception.

One afternoon he was cavorting merrily far above the snow-covered Heathdown Meadows, a number of miles from New Brunswick. He had made the flight in his spare time, first, because he liked to fly, and secondly because Garvin, the superintendent of the air-mail port, had wished to make a further test of the new radio device with which the planes had been recently equipped.

Despite the bitter cold, Glenn continued to fly about, side-slipping and tail-spinning and circling and banking over the great meadow, and every so often tuning in and reporting through the new radio to Garvin, then switching his dial back to "Receiving" and testing Garvin's messages. Garvin, seated not far from the glowing base-burner in his office, was enthusiastic about the test.

"Great stuff, Kerry!" came his voice to the aviator, miles away and thousands of feet in the air. "I can hear every word just as if you were here. Your motor is singing sweetly, too. I can hear it. Pretty soft for you pilots these days!"

Kerry, aloft, switched to "Sending."

"Yes, all the comforts of home," he replied. "But, say, Garvin, why don't you radio me up some heat? That would be a real invention. Mighty cold up here. At

least you might sing me a little song about balmy Hawaii, or something like that, and make me forget this north pole weather."

"You want too much. Talk to Edison about that," Garvin kidded back. "Say, what the devil— Am I hearing things? Why—"

"If you are," replied Kerry, "I think I'm hearing the same things. I asked for some Hawaiian music, and by golly I'm getting it!"

Through the aviator's ear phones came the strumming of a ukelele and the sweet voice of a girl raised in a Hawaiian love song.

The song was completed, followed by a burst of girlish laughter. Kerry switched over to sending again.

"Say, who's that cutting in?" he asked.

The only answer was the laughter of a girl.

When Glenn Kerry arrived back at the field he looked for Garvin, but the latter had gone to New York for a conference, and would not be back until the following evening, and Glenn was still thinking about the reception of that Hawaiian love song when he hopped off with the Chicago mail at ten o'clock that night.

As he flew along he kept wondering more and more about it. Could it have been a mere coincidence—some radio station entertainer cutting in with a ukelele selection just as he had kidded with Garvin about his desire for Hawaiian music?

He kept tuning in and out, and finally, just as he was nearing Avalon, he heard the Hawaiian love song again. He waited until it was finished, then switched over and said quickly:

"Say, who are you?"

The answer came back at once: "Who are *you*?"

"This is Pilot Glenn Kerry, of the Chicago Air Mail," he answered. "I'm just flying over Avalon now, about two thousand feet up. Are you the young lady who tuned in this afternoon with the ukelele solo?"

"How do you know it's a young lady?" came the flippant question.

"You sound young."

"I may be an old maid."

"But seriously," pleaded Glenn, "who are you, and how did you happen to tune in just at that time this afternoon?"

"Well, I'll tell you," came the voice. "It's not so odd as it seems. I have one of the outfits that you have on your plane, for dad's the inventor of it. I can both send and receive. I heard you kidding with the air-mail superintendent this afternoon, and when you said that about the Hawaiian song I ran for my ukelele and accommodated."

Kerry was about to ask further questions when there came a provocative "Good night, pilot!" And that was all.

The daughter of the inventor. He looked at the name on the radio outfit. Stedman—

When he completed his next return trip to New Brunswick, Kerry went at once to Garvin.

"Say, Garvin, who's the inventor of this new radio device?" he asked.

Garvin looked at him queerly. "Are you serious?"

"Of course."

"But do you mean to tell me you don't know?" asked Garvin in some surprise.

"I don't know. That's why I'm asking you."

Garvin threw his hands aloft in a mock gesture of despair.

"He's flying the Chicago air mail, and he asks me who's the inventor of the new device! I might as well ask you who won the war, or how old is Ann? You handsome guys! Beautiful, but dumb! Why, you big ninny, Sheldon's the inventor, of course."

"Sheldon! But the name on the plate says Stedman."

"Sure. Stedman's the money man that put it over. He had his name on it. That's the way with old man Sheldon. He's an inventive wizard, but a commercial dub. He gets a trimming on about everything he goes into. But Sheldon's the inventor, you got my word for that."

Glenn Kerry could hardly wait for his next hop-off to Chicago. Sheldon! And the mystery girl had said that she was the daughter of the inventor.

Probably true; the average girl would

not be likely to possess such a device before they were popularized and put on the general market. He'd tune in as soon as he got under way, and maybe hear her voice again.

He knew Sheldon had only one daughter. Then the mystery girl was Betty Sheldon! Would she sing him that Hawaiian song again? Would he tell her that he knew who she was, or would that spoil the game and cause her to tune out?

He waited until he passed over Bellefonte and had reported to Garvin; then, he knew, Garvin would tune out for awhile. Kerry did not want any eavesdropping in this quaint radio courtship.

For that was what it was, wasn't it? A radio courtship? Probably the first in the history of the world. But would the girl tune in?

The girl did. He had been speeding along, and he could tell by the lighted Trico Building below that he was approaching the town of Avalon. He had the dial at receiving. Suddenly came the question: "Pilot Glenn Kerry?"

"Right here. About fifteen hundred feet over Avalon. Do I get my Hawaiian selection to-night?"

"Do you think you deserve it?"

"I hope so. I'd like to hear it, anyway."

"Here goes, then," came the girl's voice.

Spinning along at a speed of a hundred miles an hour, Kerry drank in every tone of the girl who had been in his thoughts for months.

The song ended.

"Do you know who I am?" came the question.

"If I answered that, I'm afraid you might penalize me with no more songs."

"I'll tell you some time."

"Hope you do. I'll look forward to it."

"I've seen you at the New Brunswick Field," said the girl. "Maybe I'll tell you who I am some time. Good night, Captain Kerry."

The young pilot read no tenderness in the words. A more experienced Lothario would have detected a note of softness, of fondness, even of infatuation.

But that was the way with Glenn Kerry. His good looks and a certain sapling grace about his figure had caused many a young lady visitor at the field to be "crazy," as they styled it, "about his plane." It was always "the plane," and Glenn Kerry was entirely too modest to perceive that it was not the plane that they were crazy about, but the tall, blond young pilot.

He was crazy over planes himself, and he took the girls' statements seriously. For egotism is strictly an internal disease, and is quite likely to strike in the most unexpected places. Quite as often as not it is the homely male or female who has it in the most serious stage.

Glenn Kerry, in his intense interest in flying, was unmindful of many a pair of feminine eyes, blue, black, brown, gray—but always admiring—turned in his direction.

"Oh, it must be just *won*-derful to be an air-mail pilot!" a girl visitor would often say to him at the field. The girl would not infrequently turn languishing eyes upon him, and wonder if her make-up was on skillfully, and if this tall, handsome fellow admired that new travel coat of hers. How much did air-mail pilots make a week? Enough to support a wife in luxury?

"Yes, great game," Kerry would usually reply, half in embarrassment as he turned to continue tuning up his engine.

"So good-looking, but so bashful!" was the general feminine verdict. And more than one girl whose languorous eyes had failed to thrill Glenn Kerry would often add to herself: "Stuck up thing!"

Glenn often wondered if Betty Sheldon ever presumed to have radio talks with any other members of the nighthawk squadron. He hoped not. That would spoil everything.

He might have spared his doubts on this. Betty Sheldon, who had admired the tall pilot at New Brunswick Air Field, waited until the usual hour for her radio conversation with as much interest and quickened heartbeat as Kerry did. But, womanlike, she hid her interest more deftly.

"I suppose you want your solo tonight?" she would ask, with an independent

air. She often wondered what she would do if the young pilot should answer "No."

But the young pilot never answered that way.

"I am waiting for it," he would reply.

Betty often wondered why he was not a little more forward, like most of the pilots; why he never insisted upon knowing her name, and why he never tried to make a date. It seemed this Kerry was a little "slow."

And then one night came the unexpected happening that resulted in their subsequent meeting. Betty had given her nightly song with ukelele accompaniment.

"I think I'd better get something new to entertain you," she said as she finished. "Well, good night, Captain Glenn—Kerry."

Three minutes later she had "something new," but it was far from entertainment.

"Captain Kerry! Captain Kerry! Are you listening?" came the voice.

"Yes, what is it?"

"My brother is down—somewhere in Heathdown Meadows, I think! Right wing collapsed. Went down out of control. I got his message. Oh, can you do anything?"

"I'll make a search. I have parachute flares. Not far from Heathdown now."

"Thank God!" came the answer.

Pilot Kerry swooped about through the night, picked up his bearings, and speeded for Heathdown Meadows. He wondered why Betty's brother should be flying at night. He had not known that she had a brother who was a mail pilot, or indeed had not known that she had a brother at all. But he put on his greatest speed, passed over the village of Heathdown, and soon hovered over the great black shadow that was Heathdown Meadows.

He circled about, and dropped a parachute flare which lighted up the countryside. He thought he saw the crumpled wings of a plane toward the corner of the field, sprawling there like a great crippled bird near a lone tree, the branches of which moved like palsied witches' fingers in the harsh night wind.

He circled about again, and sent down another flare; then, making out the un-

mistakable shape of a plane, veered away from the tree, pointed toward the middle of the field, and made his landing.

He rushed toward the lone tree at the corner of the field, heard a low groan, and in the light of his electric torch saw the blood-spattered face of a young man whose leg was pinned beneath the wreckage.

It was but the work of a few minutes to extricate the lad, lift him up tenderly, and transfer him to his own plane. Then Glenn Kerry took off again into the night, flew back over Avalon and made a landing at the New Brunswick Field.

He had radioed instructions ahead. Garvin had called an ambulance, and in the glow of the floodlights he got a glimpse of a bearded man whom he believed to be a doctor, and of the tear-stained face of Betty Sheldon.

The injured young aviator was transferred to the ambulance, and, without delaying further, Glenn Kerry climbed back into his plane and was in the air, once more headed westward.

The weather conditions were good. The wind was back of him. He might be able to make up most of the time and have the mail in Chicago to meet the first delivery. He put on all speed; for the United States mail cannot wait.

IV.

At the end of the return trip Kerry looked up Garvin. He had previously been informed that the injured man was Richard Sheldon, the son of the builder of the Sheldon ship.

"He seems to be doing pretty well," Garvin explained. "He'll pull through—that's certain. Be out of the hospital in a few days, but he'll be piloting a wheel chair instead of a plane for some weeks to come. And here's a letter for you, Glenn. Lavender and scented and generally feminine. What are you doing these days? Chasing the ladies? That's something new for you, isn't it?"

"Might be from a sister," suggested Bannister, with an elephantine wink.

"Or some dame that 'just loves planes'—and pilots," put in another wag.

But Glenn's heart was thumping strangely. He sensed who the writer might be, and disappeared from the bantering crowd in order to open the envelope.

It was as he had surmised: a note from Betty Sheldon, in which she asked him to call at her home any afternoon that he was off duty. Her brother, she explained, was doing nicely, and would be brought back from hospital the following day.

She thanked him for his service, using most extravagant terms, and, although no one was looking, Glenn Kerry felt himself blushing.

On his first day off he called at the Sheldon home, an old-fashioned frame house on the outskirts of New Brunswick, furnished comfortably but not as elaborately as he would have expected in the home of a man like Sheldon. Somehow the discovery made him glad; it made it seem as if Betty Sheldon was not too far above him socially.

As he was ushered in, he recalled what he had heard of Sheldon's recent bad luck—how he had been maneuvered out of the most of the money on his radio invention, and how the wiseacres thought Sheldon was nearing the rocks financially.

Betty Sheldon greeted the visitor warmly. "I am so glad to see you, Captain Kerry," she said. "This is the first opportunity of thanking you personally for your very brave act in saving my brother. You don't know how much you have done for us.

"Helping to save a man's life should surely be enough—but you really saved two lives, for my father dotes on Dick. If anything serious had happened to him, I believe it would have killed father, or broken his heart and forced him out of the airplane business.

"As it is, he has been faltering. But Dick's nerve is still unshattered. He's telling father that this happening only increases his determination to win. We're entering a plane in the transcontinental race, you know."

Miss Sheldon served tea, and Glenn sat there in the large, pleasant room with a steaming teacup on his lap and feeling out of place, yet strangely happy.

"You see," Miss Sheldon explained, "I think there must have been some great purpose behind our little nightly radio conversations, for as it happened they were the means of saving Dick's life—although I thought it was just a lark when I started it. That day you went up over Heathdown Field for the radio test, I knew you were going up.

"Mr. Garvin is a great friend of father's. I tuned in and listened to the conversation you and he were having. Then when you mentioned that about the cold weather and the Hawaiian song, I couldn't resist the temptation to surprise both of you. My uke was hanging up there on the wall. See? It's there now, right beside the radio. I snatched it down and started on the song. I'd like to have seen your face just then."

"I was certainly astounded, Miss Sheldon."

"I knew you would be. And, after that I got to—er—sort of look forward to our radio talks. It must be lonesome up there through the night hours. I've been up many times myself, of course, but never at night."

"It is lonesome," Glenn admitted. "But that stunt of yours did much to remove the lonesomeness," he managed to say.

"I'm glad," said Betty. "Well, to continue. Dad's heart is set on winning this transcontinental race through the air, or at least make a good showing. It will mean a great deal to the Sheldon ship. Dick had arranged to test the new plane at night. We'd had such bad luck lately that dad and Dick thought the greatest secrecy was necessary. That's why, although it was at night, he went to Heathdown to make the test.

"There are no airplane factories down near there—except, of course, the Trico, and they're not interested in racing planes; they go in for commercial stuff. And besides, we had nothing to fear there. We know Mr. Hatton, at the head of the Trico. A very interesting man.

"I had been talking over the radio with Dick before I sang you my Hawaiian song. Then I tuned back to him, to ask if he

had heard it. I got his message, that he was going down, out of control. Then I got you, and—you know the rest."

Glenn Kerry was thinking that his visit had been a tremendous success. No jazzy, noisy flapper here—if she did play the uke.

Later he was taken upstairs to a large, airy bedroom, where in an old-fashioned canopy bed Richard Sheldon lay pale but smiling. The injured lad stretched out a bandaged hand.

"I can't shake as heartily as I'd like to—with you," he said, with his wholesome smile. "And I can't tell you how grateful I am."

Kerry tried to deprecate his service. "It was a piece of luck that I was so near," he said.

"A great piece of luck for me," young Sheldon corrected. "Gee! When I lay there, pinned under that ship, and heard the roar of your motor and saw you drop that flare, I knew that help was at hand. You seemed more important to me just then than the President of the United States. I'll never forget you, Kerry."

Later, when the trained nurse had gone downstairs with Betty for afternoon tea, young Sheldon took Kerry into his confidence.

"There's been a terrific fight on to force dad out of the game," he explained. "Somebody's awfully afraid of that new ship of his."

"But do you suspect anybody? You think that spies are tampering with your planes?"

"Oh, I'm sure of it. Our recent bad luck can't be entirely due to accidents. They were manufactured 'accidents.' And yet I don't know whom to suspect. There are only three other entries in the race, and the builders of those planes are all fine fellows. I know them personally."

He continued his story of how test pilots had left the Sheldon concern without notice; how some of their engineers had been bribed, and most of the help.

"But we refuse to be licked!" he exclaimed. "The ship that I was flying the other night can be fixed up before the race, or else dad will build another. The only

thing," he added ruefully, "I'm afraid that I myself can't be fixed up in time. And I had hoped to pilot the Sheldon ship."

He looked appraisingly at Kerry. "Say, old man, how about yourself? You're not wedded to that air-mail game, are you?"

Kerry looked up, puzzled. "Wedded to it? Why?"

"Well, dad could use a test pilot like you—one who knows the game thoroughly. There'd be more money in it, and if, by a long chance, you happened to qualify to fly the race plane, there'd be publicity to the extent that would fix you up in the game for life."

"I rather like the air-mail game," said Kerry.

"Well, promise me you'll think it over, anyhow, old man."

The two visited for some time, talked over the war, in which both had distinguished themselves, talked planes and engines, the new radio invention and various shop, and then the rather pretty white-uniformed tyrant came in and bluntly suggested that the visit be cut short.

"His temperature goes up every time he talks airplanes," she explained. "I think I'll have to break up this little discussion."

As Kerry was about to take his departure from the house, the doorbell rang.

"That's probably dad," said Betty. "He said he wanted to see you here in person and thank you for what you did."

But it did not happen to be dad. The maid ushered in a good-looking, sleek-haired man, who stood at the door with his fawn hat and gloves in his hand, and bowed graciously.

"Mr. Hatton!" said Betty, rising and extending her hand.

"Miss Betty!" said the newcomer. "I just heard some bad news. I've been out of town. I do hope that your brother Dick is making a good recovery."

"Yes, thanks to Captain Kerry here," Betty answered. "Meet Captain Kerry. This is Mr. Hatton, captain."

Hatton extended his hand heartily. Kerry felt the other's sharp eyes upon him. He disliked the man instinctively. Possibly Betty's pleasant greeting for the stranger

may have had something to do with the feeling.

"I certainly regard it as a real pleasure to meet you, sir," said Hatton smoothly.

At Betty's invitation he took a cup of tea, and chatted along pleasantly.

"You see, Mr. Kerry," he explained, "I am in the same line as yourself. We ought to know each other. I'm interested in the Trico Corporation, but I'm more concerned with the commercial future of the airplane than in such things as races and other sporting events. I'm having a demonstration of our new air trucks next week. We're delivering a consignment of typewriters to cities along the Atlantic seaboard. Sending the typewriters down from the planes with parachutes."

He talked on interestingly, expressed the hope that Mr. Sheldon would be able to make the necessary repairs on the battered plane, or build a new one equally as good before the date of the transcontinental race, and seemed pleased when he was told that Sheldon was still hopeful.

Kerry said little. He did not shine at drawing-room conversation. He was sizing up this man Hatton, who seemed to be a worthy rival for the affections of this wonderful gray-eyed goddess who sat in the room with them.

Would he chuck the air mail and take advantage of Dick Sheldon's offer? At least, it would keep him in closer touch with Betty Sheldon.

He left the house seriously thinking over the new proposition.

V.

HE thought about it so seriously that, a few weeks later, there was a general leave-taking of Glenn Kerry at the New Brunswick Air Mail port. From that time on, visiting ladies often asked about that tall, blond pilot, and were told that he had left the service.

"I hated to see him go, too—for more reasons than one," Garvin explained. "In the first place, Kerry was A No. 1—as fearless as any dare-devil, but with common sense and caution. We don't want dare-devils in this game. We want to get the

mail to its destination on time. And then he's gone with the Sheldon outfit. I'm worried about him. Sheldon's been having bad luck with his planes and pilots these last few months. His own son was almost killed. Yes, I'm worried about Kerry."

But Glenn Kerry himself was far from worried, although as test pilot for the Sheldon outfit he had one or two narrow escapes. Once his landing wheel had been slashed, unknown to him. It was not until he was already in the air that the field notified him that his inner tube had come through the shoe. It would mean a crash when his ship landed.

But Glenn Kerry, with the resourcefulness of the trained aviator, had managed to land with a ground loop by holding one wing up. He recalled that occasion mainly on account of one personal incident.

Betty Sheldon had been at the field that day, and after he had landed had come running up and had said: "Oh, Glenn! You're safe! I was so worried."

In the excitement she had used his given name for the first time.

After that, Glenn took extra precautions and went over every square inch of his plane before taking off, and saw to it that an extra guard of trustworthy men was placed about the hangar. As the date of the race grew nearer and the weather milder, he slept in the hangar.

Made wary by the treachery that had been afoot for months, Sheldon was taking no chances this time. He allowed it to be assumed by all but the few in his inner circle of confidants that the plane Glenn Kerry was testing out would be the one entered by him in the coming transcontinental non-stop race. But meanwhile work was going on night and day to build a new ship which, Sheldon hoped, would outfly the former one.

The elderly inventor spent day after day superintending the construction of the new ship from the building of its fuselage frames to the shrinking and chemical treatment of the linen which would cover the wooden framework of the wings.

Kelso, one of the most trusted of the Sheldon mechanics, came to Glenn one day, and told him that a stranger had ap-

proached him, offering him a sizable sum for information on the new plane.

Glenn looked up grimly from his work. He had been oiling a rocker arm of his plane.

"And what did you say?" he asked, severely.

"I said," replied Kelso, "a good punch on the nose, that's what I said! He snooped away before I could get one of the guards after him."

"Good for you, Kelso! You'd know him again, of course?"

Kelso grinned. "He can be identified," he said grimly, "by a big, swollen nose where my old right swing landed, but I can't think who's back of him. Somebody's been getting to our men all right. That wheel that was slashed—raw work, that was. Done to make the accident look as if the plane hadn't been tampered with. It would just be a natural-looking crash. Put you in wrong, too—make you look as if you couldn't handle a plane like this big new type. You know, Dick Sheldon's smoking you up to the old man as the pilot he needs for the race. Probably some spies have found that out."

"Have you the slightest suspicion, Kelso, who might be back of it all?"

"Not the slightest, I'm sorry to say. Sure beats me."

Kerry lowered his voice. "This is strictly between you and me, old man. Maybe I'm doing him an injustice, but Kelso, could you possibly think it was this sleek-looking Hatton that I see around here entirely too much?"

"Hatton? Nah! He'd have no object. He's got no planes entered in the race. And besides, he's crazy about old man Sheldon's daughter. And she is about him, too, if I can trust my eyes."

"Oh!" said Glenn, a little weakly.

He covered up his surprise and chagrin by some forced technical question. But Kelso, honest and efficient, but obtuse in the ways of the heart, continued:

"He's a favorite with the old man, too. Between you an' me, I wouldn't be surprised if that was a match. Hatton's doing well in the commercial aircraft line, and he's got the dough. And the old man

needs a business combination of some such sort. If he doesn't win this race his goose is cooked."

For more reasons than one, Glenn Kerry then and there made the resolution that the goose referred to would not be cooked; that he would change the goose into a crow, and make Hatton eat it raw, feathers and all. For he still held an intuitive distrust of Hatton.

A few days later his distrust became more definite. The Sheldon outfit had hired a new pilot named Carson, a young man of pleasing personality and unimpeachable references who was something of a dare-devil, often thrilling even hardened pilots and mechanics with his loops and spins and reversements above the testing field.

It was understood that Carson was ambitious to be the pilot of the one plane that Sheldon would enter in the race, and it was agreed that he had a good chance if Sheldon entered two planes. Glenn had discovered Carson in low conversation with a stoutish man named Weimar, whom he had seen in the company of Hatton more than once.

Carson had looked up guiltily, and Weimar had guffawed and raised his voice obviously in the recital of a crude funny story.

Kerry had conferred with Dick Sheldon, and had been the cause of Carson's dismissal. He could not as yet come out boldly against Hatton on such flimsy evidence, nor could he discuss the matter as he wished without being thought simply jealous of Hatton. He believed that in Dick Sheldon, though, he had a real friend, and Sheldon agreed that the new pilot must go, to make assurance doubly sure.

A few days later, Dick Sheldon telephoned him, inviting him to the Sheldon house for tea. Dick was sitting in his wheel chair in a little patiolike court at the side of the house while Betty prepared the tea inside.

"I wanted to confess to you that I broke my word," he told Glenn. "I told Betty about your suspicions."

Kerry flushed in embarrassment. "I'm sorry I said anything," he stammered. He

feared that the girl would interpret it as a bit of tale-bearing against a rival.

"Oh, don't worry about that," said Dick. "I've practically convinced Betty. I like you, Kerry, all aside of what you did for me that night at Heathdown Field. You like my sister, too, don't you, you old son-of-a-gun?" he asked frankly.

"I'm one of many men who admire her very much," Glenn replied.

"Well, I'll tip you off to something. Betty's an old-fashioned girl. It's true that she admired Hatton once. I don't blame her. He's good looking, and he's smooth. But I waited until the other night to tip her off, because she's loyal and she's set in her ways. You'd be surprised. She would never have believed anything against Hatton on a mere suspicion. But the other day I learned something on good authority. Three Trica planes have been entered in the transcontinental race."

"Then my suspicions were verified," said Glenn. "How does Hatton explain such a development after his claim not to have been interested?"

"Well, I called him up about it and he stalled. He said the firm had been going in for some of the speed planes lately, but not for this race; that they had thought of trying for the bigger standing prize for the New York to Honolulu flight. He said that, at the last minute, they found they couldn't operate with enough gasoline space for the longer flight, and so he'd entered them in the transcontinental race. Sounds fishy to me. Anyhow, he's in the race. He's a rival now, and he won't be welcome at our plant any more. And now I'll wheel myself to the back lawn. Betty wants to have a private talk with you. She has an idea.

"Betty!" he called. "I'm taking off for the back lawn again. Come on out and talk with Glenn Kerry, and tell him about that idea."

Betty appeared in the door, clad in a simple gown of white georgette that set off her brunette beauty and slight form to advantage.

"I have a real idea," she said. "I've let Dick in—Dick's always safe with a secret. But no one else knows. Listen!"

And Glenn Kerry listened. And as he did, his eyes became bigger and bigger with astonishment.

VI.

As the date approached for the non-stop transcontinental air race, the newspapers were filled with stories of the plans of the various contestants, photographs of probable pilots, and the facts about the proposed race and the rules governing it. Interest had been unflagging for weeks.

The achievements of the gallant Lindbergh, the Lone Eagle, were reviewed, as well as those of Chamberlin, Levine, and the various flyers who had accomplished flights to Europe and flights between the Hawaiian Islands and the mainland. Due to the fact that several planes had been lost in transoceanic flights, these ventures were beginning to be somewhat frowned upon, but not one word of criticism had been heard anent the present overland race.

Betty Sheldon, bred to the air, was seen much in the company of Glenn Kerry. One evening her father, Samuel Sheldon, returned to his home as his son hobbled in on crutches.

"Don't let this business excite you too much, Dick," his father advised. "You're not over that smash yet. You seem to be a little too active these days. Save up your energy. If the Sheldon plane wins this race, you'll have a big job on your hands after you get well, and if we lose—well, I'm afraid it 'll need a healthy young man to carry on the almost hopeless fight. You ought to be in bed. Where have you been?"

"I've just returned from a little dinner party, with Betty and Glenn Kerry."

Samuel Sheldon frowned. "He's a clean-cut young fellow, that Kerry," he said, "but, Dick, after all, he's a penniless pilot. Do you think—"

"I think he's the man who saved my life, dad. We can't forget that, you know. And, after all, a young girl follows the dictates of her heart these days. I hope you're not going to say anything against Glenn Kerry, dad," he added, with a look of concern.

"Of course not. Well, I've had a busy

day. I guess I'll be off to bed. Is Betty in?"

"She'll be here soon," said Dick. "She and Glenn have gone to the theater."

A prize of twenty-five thousand dollars had been hung up for the winner in the coming transcontinental non-stop race, and another of ten thousand dollars to the contestant who came in second.

In addition, wealthy sportsmen and air enthusiasts had added various prizes for those who would finish the flight, regardless of their position in the race. It would be a good opportunity, it was said, to compare the various types of modern airplane, as any type of land plane could be entered in the race except that multimotored ships were barred, and there were no rules as to how many rode in the cockpit or how much fuel was to be carried.

Before the closing of the entries, Samuel Sheldon had registered two entrants—Glenn Kerry and a pilot named Runyon, who had a good flying record and had come to the Sheldon outfit with good references. Runyon would fly the repaired plane and Kerry the new one.

It was a thrilling day for Glenn Kerry when the assembling of the new Sheldon ship was completed in the Sheldon hangar, and with Samuel Sheldon as a passenger he made his first test flight. Both were enthusiastic over the new ship's quick take-off, its gas capacity, its promise of speed and maneuverability.

The former air mail pilot now slept in the hangar every night, and the hangar guard was doubled. Philip Hatton still had the brass to make a call at the Sheldon home, but received word that Miss Sheldon was out.

He seemed as pleasant as ever these days, however. He left an invitation for Miss Sheldon to make a flight in one of the Trico entries—an invitation that Miss Sheldon never availed herself of, for Dick Sheldon had discovered that Carson, the discharged Sheldon pilot, was now in the employ of Hatton, and was to be one of the Hatton race pilots.

"It's all business, you know," Hatton had said, pleasantly, when Dick asked him

about this. "The Sheldons and the Hattons are rivals in this big event, it is true—but friendly rivals, old man. Of course I'd like to have one of my planes win," he added, with a semblance of sincerity. "But if we don't win, my choice best wishes are for my friend, Samuel Sheldon."

Dick Sheldon departed unconvinced. He took a taxicab over to his father's plant, where speed tests and load tests were being carried on daily, as well as work on gnomonic charts and close study of the air maps of the various States that would be traversed.

Samuel Sheldon shared the enthusiasm of his pilot, Kerry, disagreeing with him in only one particular. Glenn had championed the carrying of a record amount of gasoline, while the inventor insisted that filling the great tanks to capacity would cut down the speed of the new plane unnecessarily.

"I've got that new air valve on the carburetor," he argued, "and that's going to cut down your gas consumption more than any one ever dreamed of. You know how it's come out in the tests. I must approve of most of your ideas, Kerry. I think you're a little stubborn on this point. Runyon agrees with me."

Kerry was silent. He did not want to say that, in his more cautious moments, he did not know whether he even trusted Runyon. He was keeping his own counsel these days. His two confidantes were Dick and Betty Sheldon.

His employer, Samuel Sheldon, he respected and admired, but he was of the opinion that the senior Sheldon, a man of honest stock and honest ambitions, was a little too credulous and open for the welfare of his own interests.

He took Dick's advice on the handling of the senior Sheldon. Dick, who sometimes rode in the test flights despite his crippled condition, was for carrying the capacity amount of fuel. He and Kerry made the tests carefully, starting with light loads and going by degrees up almost to six hundred gallons. The difference of opinion in this one matter never came to the point of a real clash.

Samuel Sheldon was so hopeful these days, after the test flights, that he looked ten years younger than when he had been

poring over the drafting tables with the Sheldon chief engineer.

On the morning of the great race Chamberlin Field was in a maze of excitement. All through the night crowds from the city thronged to the air field, coming in automobiles from theaters and night clubs and cabarets, and watching the gnomelike figures of the field attachés flitting about in the glow shed by the flood lights.

A great corps of New York City police and specials kept the crowd in tolerably good order. As dawn streaked the sky, newspaper photographers took snaps of the mobs before the concession stands and photographed the various planes and contestants as the final fueling of the planes went on.

One blue-and-gold plane chartered by a newspaper flew over the field and made air photos. On the under-surface of its wings was painted the sign: "New York to Honolulu." It was this plane that, a few weeks later, would attempt the record flight from the American metropolis to the island capital.

Glenn Kerry, the night before, had of necessity shed the worries of the past few weeks. He had retired early and had slept undisturbed for nine hours, leaving much of the final preparations for departure and the necessary guarding to Dick Sheldon, whom he trusted as fully as he trusted himself.

He reached the field soon after dawn, and found the eight planes, including his own, ready to take the air. He was met by a sleepy Dick.

"You look rather puckery-eyed, Dick, old boy," he greeted.

"I suppose I am," said Dick, yawning. "But I can jump into the hay, if necessary, after you take off. I can," he added, grinning, "but I'm not sure that I shall. I'll be too darned excited."

"Is Betty here?"

"She'll be here in a few minutes—on her way now. She's coming out with Alice Dart."

Alice Dart was an attractive girl who had planned to be a passenger in the race, but had withdrawn, influenced by the tears of a protesting mother who was fearful that

her daughter might share the fate of Miss Doran in the Hawaiian flight some time before.

"Miss Dart is to be the honorary starter of the race, you know," Dick informed him. "She'll have to be here in very good season, and Betty's in the same car, so don't worry. Dad will be here soon. He's over there with Runyon. Runyon's fretting about the engine. He crabbed a little yesterday—hinted that he ought to have the new plane, that he could win the race with that."

"You know, Dick, that I'm not out for personal glory. Whatever I'm told to do—that goes."

"I know it, Kerry. You're the one man I trust, outside of father. By golly, I wouldn't even trust Runyon too far away! Seems a little hard boiled, maybe, but that is what my experiences have done to me."

Samuel Sheldon made his appearance within a few minutes. He had been gliding about nervously, conferring with Runyon and talking rather unwillingly with newspaper men.

Within thirty hours, and possibly very much less, if his planes were forced down *en route*, he would know whether he was due for a new prosperity or was practically a ruined man.

He kissed his daughter as she arrived in a big car with Alice Dart, and the two girls fought their way through the crowds. She stood by his side, clad in her thick white sweater, as the inventor had a low-voiced discussion with Kerry.

"Well," Sheldon was saying, "I'm satisfied with everything. You've done good work, Kerry, and win or lose I want you to know that I'm your friend and that as long as the Sheldon outfit holds together you're a Sheldon employee. I still think that you'll only need four hundred gallons, even if you buck head winds all the way, and with that new air-valve invention—"

"Father," put in Dick, who had hobbled over on his crutches, "you know that Glenn has never been wrong in any of his ideas so far. He wants to win this race as much as you do."

The elderly man turned away, half convinced.

"Well, I'll talk a few minutes with Runyon," he said.

As he left, a close observer might have detected a series of winks pass between the three youngsters.

The final fueling was being completed. A great crescendo of roaring from the fueled planes added to the general excitement. Some of the engines were warming up, and the first one would take off within half an hour now. Runyon, the pilot of the second Sheldon plane, came rushing over to Kerry.

"Glad you're all set, Kerry, old man," he said. "I'm not quite so well off. That motor of mine doesn't sound exactly sweet to me. May be my imagination, but I'm a little nervous; there's been so much tampering I don't trust my own opinion any more. I want you to take off with me and scoot around for five minutes—just circle the field with me and listen to the motor, and let me start with a good feeling about it. I mentioned it to the old man. He suggested it."

"But the final inspections have been made, and—"

"Just for five minutes," pleaded Runyon. "You'll be back here in plenty of time. I want at least to make some showing with that old bus."

Runyon seemed sincere. Leaving Dick and Betty and a corps of trusted mechanics in charge of his ship, Kerry ran across the field and took his seat in the extra cockpit of the repaired Sheldon plane. A couple of minutes later he was taxiing down the field with Runyon at the joy-stick, and a moment later was in the air.

Kerry listened to the motor. It seemed perfectly all right to him. He motioned Runyon to throttle down.

"O. K., Runyon," he shouted. "Your imagination, I guess. Back again now. Not much time left."

But Runyon was steering directly away from the field. His powerful engine would soon whisk them a considerable distance off. Kerry stood up in the cockpit, and found himself looking into the small circle of the barrel of a revolver.

Runyon throttled down a minute, and said grimly: "It's necessary, Kerry!

"You're not going back there to start. We are taking a little pleasure run together."

With no controls in the passenger department, Glenn found himself hopeless. He looked dismally at the empty socket that had contained the second joy-stick.

VII.

HOWEVER, Kerry had not come completely unprepared. Runyon had seemed "all right" to him previously, but, like Dick Sheldon, he had found that the experiences of the past few weeks had planted suspicion of almost any stranger in his heart.

He had been discussing a few moments previously the fact that Philip Hatton was not present at the air field, rather an irregular development, considering that he had three planes entered in the race. He had wondered if there was any significance in this fact.

He now realized that there had been. No matter what raw work was pulled, it would be difficult to prove anything against Hatton. Very likely Hatton had paid over a sizable sum to Runyon as a bribe, and very likely both realized that there would be a searching investigation of Kerry's kidnapping by Runyon.

He assumed that Runyon would have some alibi ready, that even if it did not fully convince would shield Hatton; then Runyon, although in bad odor generally, could buy himself an old plane and go barnstorming about the country. A man who could be bribed would not be apt to worry about the reputation he left behind.

Glenn sat back, as if defeated. The field was fast receding from view. He could not get hold of the joy-stick. Runyon had that gun. And precious moments were slipping by.

Glenn felt for his parachute, and then, taking a pair of pliers from the pocket of his flying coat, he suddenly reached over the side of the ship and deliberately cut the gas-control wire running to the carburetor. Then he pulled the end of it so that the gas was cut off.

With an oath Runyon was working feverishly at the dead throttle, and Glenn stood

upon the cowl of the plane and leaped. It was his last chance, for Sheldon, for Betty, for Dick and himself.

The dead plane had been caught in a descending air current and was dangerously low for a jump, but Glenn knew that luck was with him when he felt the riser jerk on his shoulders and the leg straps tighten.

A couple of minutes before he landed in a gully at the side of a road he saw the Runyon plane hit the ground a number of rods away from the road, and nose over, and Runyon get out groggily and start to flag an automobile coming along the road.

There was a moment's parley, and then he saw Runyon climb into the car and the latter speed along the road which, a few miles back, would skirt the air field. Runyon was getting back to the field first with his story, whatever it would be.

At any event, he meant to keep Kerry out of the race. And he had already put the other Sheldon plane out of commission. Things looked dark for the Sheldon interests.

As Glenn landed, he pulled in the shroud lines and extricated himself from the parachute, which he left in a tangled mass by the roadside. He set off at a full run down toward the field. An automobile passed him. He yelled desperately to be given a ride. The driver paid no attention to him.

He rounded a curve, and saw that several cars filled with curiosity seekers were speeding back along the road. Undoubtedly the occupants had seen him come down in the parachute, and had seen the plane crash, and believed that there was more excitement in this quarter than at the flying field.

He stopped one of the cars, a powerful one, made quick explanations, and, after a heart-breaking lapse of time, it seemed to him, was allowed to get in. The young man at the wheel smelled of liquor, which, instead of giving him the usual recklessness, seemed to make him aware of the necessity for cautious driving. The big car plodded along the road, woefully slow.

In desperation Glenn crowded the young fellow away from the wheel, took it himself, and turned down a roadway which he knew

circled about toward the Sheldon hangars. Within a couple of minutes the big car was doing fifty.

The alcoholic young man set up a shout, and before the car reached the Sheldon hangars a steady *put-put* in the rear told Glenn that one of the many bicycle policemen gathered about the field for the big day was on his trail. He pressed the accelerator down to the floor boards.

But motorcycle officers are determined men and fast riders. The motorcycle gradually overhauled the big car.

"Turn in there!" the officer shouted.

Kerry kept going. The officer pulled his automatic.

"Turn in there!" he repeated. He was racing alongside, and on his face was the expression of outraged authority.

Kerry kept going.

"Don't you see, officer?" he yelled. "I'm one of the Sheldon pilots, Glenn Kerry. I was tricked. Taken up in that plane and kidnapped. Don't stop me. Seconds count."

The officer put his automatic away, but continued alongside until Kerry drew up beside the Sheldon hangars. Then Kerry alighted, gave quick details of the happenings of the past few minutes, found that the motorcycle cop was not such a bad fellow after all, and soon after was a passenger on the uniformed man's motorcycle, speeding over the hard field toward his plane.

As he neared the latter the milling crowds made the motorcycle useless. Kerry leaped off and ran breathlessly toward his plane, crashing through the mob of humanity like a football center.

He found Runyon already there, in feverish conversation with Samuel Sheldon. A hot wave of indignation swept through him at the man's treachery. He rushed up to Runyon and staggered him with a blow to the jaw.

"More treachery!" he yelled to Dick. "But we can't lose any time. I need a new parachute."

"One right here!" answered Dick. "Don't stop. I'll explain, and put this dirty viper Runyon where he belongs. Betty's in the plane for the photograph."

Betty Sheldon, wearing her heavy white sweater, and with a pair of goggles and a helmet, was talking to a newspaper photographer.

"Come in here, Glenn!" she called. "The signal's going to sound for your plane. That's it!" she added, as Kerry took his position in the cockpit.

"But what—" gasped the astonished Samuel Sheldon.

"Have you got my picture, photographer?" asked Betty. "All right. Daddy!"

Samuel Sheldon ran forward to lift his daughter from the cockpit. Suddenly she bent forward.

"Good-by, daddy dear!" she shouted, and kissed him on the cheek.

Then Glenn Kerry "gave 'er the gun," and the Sheldon plane went roaring down the field.

VIII.

A DEAFENING shout went up from thousands of throats as the big white plane with its huge gas tank soared off. Kerry circled the field, and Betty waved her handkerchief to her father and brother standing below and gazing aloft. Then Kerry pointed the nose of the plane west.

There was a good tail wind, the weather was clear, and he swooped furiously along. The enemies of Samuel Sheldon had only broken their lances upon him.

It was typical of his pilot's mind that, up here in the air, he now felt perfectly safe, and free from the worries and treacheries of the past several weeks. He was fueled for fifty-two hours in the air, he had the greatest confidence in the new Sheldon plane, and the girl he loved was by his side.

On the flying field Samuel Sheldon stood with a dazed look on his face. He turned to his son, but instead of finding any surprise there he found a knowing grin.

"What does this mean—Betty doing this sort of thing?" he asked. "And you knew about it, Dick—I can tell from your expression that you knew about it."

"I did, dad," Dick admitted. "I kept the secret—that and one other. Betty was afraid you might have forbidden her to do what she did. She thought if she just did

it this way—well, she wouldn't be disobeying you. She thought you had had enough worries."

"I am afraid I am getting old," said Sheldon wearily. "I had thought that children confided in their parents. Betty had this all made up with Kerry. She seems to have more confidence in him than in me. And I am her father."

"And Kerry," Dick added, "is her husband."

"Her husband!"

"Yes, dad, and any girl's lucky to get him. And her place is right up there beside him. Do you recall that night when I came in from New York and told you I had been at a dinner party? Well, I was. But I didn't think it was necessary at that time to add that it was a wedding dinner party. And this is their delayed honeymoon trip. What better kind of a honeymoon for a pilot and his bride—particularly when his bride is a Sheldon?"

Samuel Sheldon shook his white head. "You young folks!" he said. "Sometimes I don't understand you. Well, if Betty's happy, I'm happy."

"She's happy, don't make any mistake about that!" Dick assured him. "And what sort of gibberish was Runyon pouring into your ear? Saying that Kerry threatened him with a revolver, trying to force him out of the race through personal jealousy, and all that? Does it seem reasonable, with Kerry the husband of Betty? Of course, you don't believe a word of it, dad."

"No, I don't. As for Runyon, we'll see how this race comes out. I have only two interests in life at this moment—the success of the Sheldon plane in this race, and the safety of my daughter. You don't think our enemies would attempt any more dirty work, now with the race already started, do you?" asked Samuel Sheldon, nervously.

"No, Kerry has countered effectively every time they tried to put him out. And I think when this is all over, dad, you'll find that the villain in all this melodrama of the past few months has been Philip Hatton. But all that investigation can come later. Come! We'll ride down to

the newspaper office and get the reports on the race."

In the office of the Trico Company at Avalon, Philip Hatton sat beside a telephone. As soon as it rang he picked up the receiver, and his eyes lighted up with anticipation.

"Yes?" he called into the mouthpiece. "All right, Weimar! Well? What? Damn that Runyon! Well, go easy! Start here right away. Details then. Easy, I tell you! Tell me when you get here."

His thin nostrils dilating in anger at the news that the Sheldon plane had got away, he snapped the receiver back on the hook, cutting off Weimar, his benchman, in the middle of a sentence.

The telephone bell rang again, but, with a curse, Hatton snatched the receiver off the hook and placed it on the desk. Let that fool Weimar keep ringing; he, Hatton, refused to do any more talking when it was action that was needed.

He opened a drawer, and from a corner beneath several books, took out a little vellum-bound code book, the keys of which he had originated himself. He paged it through feverishly, and after a few moments penciled out the following cabalistic message:

Blank Blondo Skogo Mattox.

Then, although the code was a private one that the most ingenious person might fail to decipher, he tore the pages out of the vellum binding, cut them into little strips and then tore them across, rolled them into a crumpled ball, and then crossed the yard of the Trico plant, where a man was at the key of a radio outfit.

"Right away," he said to the man, who looked back at him meaningly. "Don't waste a second."

The radio operator looked at the code, meaningless even to him. Only Hatton and Carson, the dare-devil pilot, knew the meaning of those coined symbols from the code book.

Hatton knew that Carson would take any chance for money; knew that Carson didn't like Kerry anyhow, since Kerry was the means of his having been discharged

from the Sheldon plant. If Carson himself took too big a chance, and should die in the crash—so much the better. It would be money saved for Hatton. That was the way Philip Hatton worked.

He crossed back through the yard to the office, and found his private telephone still emitting buzzes from the disconnected receiver. Probably central telling him to hang up. He took the receiver and banged it back on the hook.

But then the telephone started to ring again, and with extreme impatience Hatton took it off and put it to his ear.

"Hello!" he yelled. "Well, didn't I say to shut up and get over here? You dubs can't follow plain instructions. *What?*"

He listened for a moment. His eyes were staring. He let the telephone instrument clatter to the desk.

"Good God!" he ejaculated. In moments of stress, even Philip Hattons call upon their Maker.

He had absented himself from the flying field with design, believing that his presence would have done no good. Every arrangement had been made, his chief lieutenant, Weimar, had been there, and both had thought it a wise plan for him to have been "ill."

Then if Runyon had carried out the prearranged plan satisfactorily, he, Hatton, could have been as surprised as any one else. He had laid all his plans craftily. And now Weimar had given him the almost unbelievable information that Betty Sheldon had accompanied Kerry in the race.

He had the deep-down admiration for Betty Sheldon that a man of his stripe often has for a good woman. He rose from his chair so suddenly that he tipped it over, and raced back over the Trico yard and into the little office where his operator was at his key.

"Stop that message, Rees!" he shouted. "Stop it!"

"What message?"

"The one I just gave you, you damned fool!"

"But you told me to send it," said Rees. "And I did."

Glenn Kerry was scooting along. The

day was sunny, and residents of the towns along the Hudson River were out in force to look up at the silver wings of the great planes high in the air.

The Sheldon plane was not in the lead, but Glenn Kerry was satisfied, and extremely hopeful. Mere speed was a minor element at the present stage. He admitted that there might even be faster ships in the race, but it was a long, hard course; to keep going was the main thing, and he had every confidence that the Sheldon plane would do that.

Everything was running as smoothly as he could wish. Far later on in the race when his great gasoline load was lighter, he could make better time.

The roar of the pounding cylinders came musically to his ears. There was excellent visibility. The Hudson River below him was a beautiful silver streak. So long as this visibility lasted he would follow the course of the river to a certain point, and then steer a compass course.

He flew on through a low-hanging cloud, and as he emerged from it saw that another plane had been circling about there. Why was this plane circling about instead of getting on along the course?

He recalled some experiences of his own during the war—how scouts used to "lay" for enemy planes by hiding behind a cloud.

The plane came dangerously close. He failed to recognize the pilot, but he recognized the plane as a Trico product, and saw the rival pilot feeling for his parachute.

For a moment the old thrill of battle blazed in Glenn Kerry's eyes. His thoughts went back to the times when he had engaged Fritzzy planes far above the lines, with his machine gun synchronized with the engine to shoot between the blades of the propeller.

But that was war. Now he could hardly reconcile the idea of this peaceful, sunny day with the Hudson gleaming below, and the idea of a man in a rival plane who was not the airman of a rival army, but a lunatic or a plain murderer. The girl of his dreams was beside him, and the Sheldon fortunes were riding with him; and here was a time for discretion.

Glenn Kerry knew every trick of the air—

man. He had learned them in the hard school of the war, and later, of the air mail; also he had spent a period in barn-storming and "stunting."

He realized that, at the present stage of the race, with his heavy load of gasoline, the other ship was the faster. It had even outdistanced him in the race thus far, and had turned back and circled behind that cloud until he had come in sight. It was no time for straight flying in the hope that he might escape from his rival.

The result was that the residents of a certain little village nestling in the hills along the Hudson River were treated to a wholly unexpected series of stunts as elaborate as any maneuvers ever made by rival planes above a battle-field. The inhabitants had come out of their houses to see the race planes fly by; and they saw far more than they had expected.

Many believed that these maneuvers were for some sensational publicity effect. But Glenn Kerry knew that they were for the safety of himself and the Sheldon plane and, more than anything else, the safety of the girl who rode with him. Already he half regretted that he had brought Betty along with him.

He throttled the motor and called to her: "This business looks bad. We'll have to stunt a little."

Betty actually laughed. "You know what to do, dear," she called.

Kerry flew full speed on with the pursuing plane on his tail and went into an Immelman turn. A short distance ahead of him he could see a large bridge that spanned the river.

He flew straight on, aiming straight at the bridge, swooped and dived full on and zoomed as gracefully as a swallow under one of the arches; then, on the other side of the bridge, started to climb, for he was now dangerously low.

He looked back and realized from the stampeding crowd on the banks that something unusual had happened. He guessed what it was, that his pursuer had struck one of the arches of the bridge and had fallen.

Kerry climbed to fifteen hundred feet and raced on. His rival had disappeared into the river. The tail skid of his plane

had brushed the under surface of one of the bridge arches, and the plane of Carson, the dare-devil, crumbled and went down out of control.

IX.

WITH a terrible sense of foreboding, Philip Hatton had telephoned his henchman, Weimar, that he would meet him at a certain New York hotel. He refused to listen to any statements of Weimar.

At the end of a lengthy series of misdeeds and long chances, Philip Hatton had grown suddenly cautious. He had ordered his radio operator, Rees, to send out a message to Carson canceling the previous instructions, but it had taken him several nervous minutes to think out the code—he had already destroyed his code book—and Rees complained that he could not raise Carson.

Hatton had then had the radio outfit taken out of evidence, told Rees he was through for the day, and had started to New York.

He met Weimar at the appointed place. The two engaged a room, and ordered a bell boy bootlegger to procure certain desired refreshments for them. It was not until then that the whitefaced Hatton would speak or would listen to his chief aid.

"Well?" he asked, when they were inside and the door locked.

"One of our planes still in the race," answered Weimar. "Garret's plane. Carroll broke an oil lead over eastern Pennsylvania. And, of course, you know about Carson."

"I don't know about anything!" replied Hatton sharply, putting down his whisky glass. "I came over here in a beeline. I saw the crowds before newspaper offices, and all that. But I was afraid to stop and ask. What about Carson?"

"Carson died in a hospital up the State. He crashed into a bridge over the Hudson. Tail skid hit one of the arches."

"And how about the Sheldon plane?"

"Still going, according to last accounts. Garret's in the lead, though, with our new model. Christensen plane's next, quite a piece in the rear. The two Caldwells bunched together about twenty miles behind. Kerry and the girl in the Sheldon,

back in the cellar, but plugging along with no troubles."

"They're safe, then!" Hatton almost shouted.

"Of course they're safe, Phil. What's so unusual about that? Unless— By the eternal, I know now why Carson hit that bridge! Heard some dope about a lot of air stunts up there over the Hudson. Say, Phil—"

"We won't discuss anything about that, Weimar!" Hatton cut in. "Carson's dead, you say. Well, that's that. They don't tell any tales when they're dead. You ought to know that," he added, meaningly.

"Are you ever goin' to stop ridin' me about that Chicago matter?" asked Weimar. "I'm playin' the game, ain't I?"

"You've got to play it," Hatton informed him, coolly. "And don't ever ask me anything about this race business again as long as you live. You and I are in this thing together, Weimar. You keep a stiff upper lip, and keep it sewed tight to your lower one—see? You got plenty on me, but I got plenty on you. Get that?"

"I never crowed that I had anything on you," said Weimar, sullenly.

"At the end of this race, no matter how it comes out," Hatton told his accomplice, "I'm going to marry Betty Sheldon. If we win, we've got plenty of jack with all the orders that 'll come in. If Sheldon wins, they'll have plenty. But even if one of the other companies cops the prize, I'm going to marry Betty Sheldon. I'd marry her if she didn't have a bent nickel."

"Gee! You got it bad, Phil."

"That's all right. And choose your language whenever you start a sentence about her. Well, come on, Weimar, we'll go down and tune in and get the race stuff over the radio."

He rose from his chair, picked up his cane, and the two men left the hotel room and rang for the elevator.

The whisky he had imbibed had given Hatton temporary false courage. Carson was dead, and that was that.

"You have a radio room in this hotel?" he asked the elevator operator.

"Yes, sir. Mezzanine floor."

"Let us off there," said Philip Hatton.

In the cozily furnished radio quarters of the Hotel Landers, several men and a few ladies were lounging in the cretonned wicker chairs listening to the reports on the great transcontinental non-stop airplane race.

The clear tones of the station announcer came through the cone:

"There is an unconfirmed report that one of the Caldwell planes is down in western Pennsylvania. The following message has been received from the *Pittsburgh Chronicle*."

The announcer read the message, which stated that a western Pennsylvania farmer had seen a plane crash in his pasture; that the pilot had crawled out from the wrecked machine and was rushed to a hospital, though suffering only from minor injuries.

"This message has not been officially confirmed," went on the announcer, "but if this is so, it means that four planes are left in the race out of eight starters. One of the Sheldon planes crashed in a trial spin before the race began. The second plane to meet with disaster was the Trico plane piloted by Arthur Carson, that courageous flyer meeting with death near Poughkeepsie, where he crashed into the bridge. Another Trico plane was forced down with a broken oil lead over western Pennsylvania. Now, it is stated unofficially, that one of the Caldwell planes is down, but this is unconfirmed. The next announcement on the great non-stop transcontinental airplane race will be given you in exactly fifteen minutes."

Hatton nodded to Weimar, and the two took the elevator to their room on the upper floor. Since there would be a wait of fifteen minutes, Hatton felt the need of a stimulant.

Now as he sat there and pushed the bottle over to Weimar, the head of the Trico Corporation felt more at peace with the world. The Trico plane was still leading. Hatton believed that it had a good chance. The only ship in the race that he feared was the remaining Sheldon entrant, and even if that won he would still be on top.

Leave it to Phil Hatton. He would effect a marriage with Betty Sheldon, whom he still believed single and fancy free. It was part of the egotism of the man, suc-

cessful with various women, that Betty was very much interested in him. He thought he knew the signs.

That was tough luck about Carson, he ruminated, but it would have been tougher luck if Carson had crashed the Sheldon plane. He did not fear the Christensen entrant or the remaining Caldwell monoplane.

Generously lined with liquor, he and Weimar returned to the radio room within twenty minutes. As they entered, the radio announcer was saying:

"—and the matter was entirely secret even to Mr. Sheldon himself, who stated that the event happened some few weeks ago, and that his son, Richard Sheldon, acted as one of the witnesses. The other witness was Miss Alice Dart, who at one time, you will recall, had planned to be a passenger in the transcontinental race. Mr. and Mrs. Kerry in the Sheldon entry are now in third place, having passed the Christensen plane."

His voice droned on, but Hatton had crossed the room and was feverishly button-holing a lone man who stood near the doorway.

"I missed part of that announcement," he said. "What was that message?"

"He was announcing that Glenn Kerry, one of the race pilots, had married this Betty Sheldon some weeks ago. Great piece of news. My name is Garvin, by the way. I'm superintendent of the New Brunswick Air Mail Port, and I know this Kerry well. Fine chap. I think I know about the date that this romance started. Kerry was making a test of the new Stedman radio device, and—"

But the speaker cut his conversation short for a moment, and both he and Hatton were paying attention to the significant tones of the station announcer, who was saying:

"Here is a most important announcement, ladies and gentlemen. A newspaper reporter of the Albany *Times-Union* claims to have a remarkable ante-mortem statement from Carson, the Trico pilot who was killed near Poughkeepsie. Statement alleged to have been made in the presence of a doctor, a clergyman, and a trained

nurse at the Poughkeepsie General Hospital.

"The statement is a lengthy one. I may be able to read it for you later, radio fans, but for the present will give the digest contained in the bulletin from Albany. It is to the effect that the head of a certain aircraft corporation radioed Carson to crash the remaining Sheldon plane in the race, in order to disable it. It goes on to say that the person named in the statement had been responsible for several of the accidents recently happening to the Sheldon planes. A most sensational piece of news, if true, and—"

But Hatton, white-faced, had signaled to Weimar, whose eyes were staring. The two conspirators slunk out of the radio room.

X.

WESTWARD flew Glenn Kerry in his Sheldon plane, now so low that watchers in cities and villages and on farms could plainly read the number painted on the under-surface of the ship's wings, as it soared over hills and bridges and tall buildings and climbed to skim the Alleghanies.

As the sun sank in the west and the night breeze freshened, Kerry sat there at his joy-stick, traversing a corner of the Middle Western territory where he had formerly flown with the Chicago air mail, and on over the Maywood Field, which is the air-mail port of Chicago.

The new air-valve invention was working splendidly, and he had plenty of fuel for the purpose he had in mind. He felt safe up here. There was not the most fugitive thought of danger, for he was only doing now what he had done for years. The prize would be greater if he won, but the risk was only the same.

His motor was singing sweetly, and the ship was doing all that he had believed it would do. He would be sorely in need of sleep when he reached his destination, but meanwhile his system, energized by athletics and regular hours and no dissipation, could stand the strain.

He would lose no more sleep than many a man destroying his bank account and his system in night clubs and cabarets, and

in his own opinion he was in no greater danger. He was something of a fatalist. What was bound to happen would happen; meanwhile it behooved one to be as cautious as would be fitting—a sort of “Trust in God and keep your powder dry” philosophy.

From the time Glenn Kerry had qualified for the air service of his country, and through the years that he had flown in battle, in stunting and barnstorming, and air mail and test flying, many a cautious conservative man had died in his bed. And here he was, spinning over the Middle Western prairies on a gallant quest.

He received radio messages occasionally. The new Stedman sending and receiving set had been barred, since the invention had not as yet been put on the general market and some of the contestants could not have had their ships equipped in time. Hatton was one of the owners who had objected to the use of this aid.

Kerry believed that the sleek-looking aircraft man had had sinister reasons for his act. However, since the Stedman set had brought him and his wife together he felt satisfied to do without it for the present.

Back in their home on the outskirts of New Brunswick a white-haired man sat before a radio and listened to the periodical reports of an announcer for the trans-continental race. A young man who held a pair of crutches in his lap sat opposite. They were Samuel Sheldon, the inventor, and his son Dick.

The elderly man had dozed off, worn out by the worries of the past several weeks and the nerve-racking excitement of the past few hours.

“Did you hear that, dad?” asked Dick eagerly. “Glenn is second in the race now.”

The older man started, and opened his eyes. “What’s that, Dick? Second? Good! I don’t care what happens now, so long as Betty is safe. I wish we had the new device on. I’d give a good deal to hear her voice this minute. Maybe we couldn’t pick them up, though.”

“You’ll hear her voice plenty, dad, some day soon,” replied Dick hopefully.

“Any more word about Hatton?” asked Sheldon, Sr.

“They haven’t located him yet. He’s hiding out somewhere. The main point is that he failed, dad. Well, the Sheldon interests have had hard luck in small matters the past few months. Maybe we’ll have the luck in this big one.”

But Samuel Sheldon did not hear his son. He had dozed again.

Meanwhile, hundreds and hundreds of miles away, Glenn Kerry was wide awake, flying on and on and on, steering on his compass course through the gloom, and knowing from his various check-points that he was on the right course.

On and on. Those brilliant lights were the city of St. Louis. On and on, over the broad Mississippi and through the night along over the flat prairie; above the glow of towns and cities; over the darkness of mesquite and sagebrush as he winged steadily west.

The weather was still fine, but cooler. The plane was approaching the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies. He steered a course south by west now, and looked at his altimeter and soared another two thousand feet.

Over Salt Lake City; over the deserts of New Mexico and Arizona, and over the Salton Sea.

The speed of the new plane was surprising as he used more and more fuel and the carrying load became lighter. His radio equipment had told him that the Christensen plane was down near Salt Lake; that he and one of the Caldwells and the Trico were all that remained of eight starters.

The first dawn was starting to streak the sky when San Francisco finally hove in sight. Despite the early hour, throngs of sightseers crowded the big field. Escort planes came out to meet him, and as he drew closer he could see the ground crews about the hangars.

Flares helped out the early dawn light as he flew over the field and circled about. He throttled down the motor.

“Are you still game, dear?” he asked. “Plenty of fuel left, and we’re running like a watch.”

“I’m game, dear,” Betty replied. “I

wouldn't have it any other way. I know everything will be all right. And if not—we'll at least be together, and we have the rubber boat."

It is just possible that if these two adventurous youngsters could have seen the joyous face of Samuel Sheldon back in his New Brunswick home, they would not have had the audacity—or rather, the heart—to carry out the daring plan which they had made weeks ago, after the surprising tests of the great Sheldon plane.

They would have seen Samuel Sheldon, before his radio set, jumping up and down for glee, then wear a puzzled expression as his son looked at him quizzically with a "Keep cool, dad. I know it's going to be all for the best."

For the news from far-off San Francisco was that the Sheldon plane had not landed. At San Francisco the crowd was astonished to see it circle about the field three times and then tilt skyward. Glenn had throttled down and reminded her: "Last call, Betty. Up to you. We have plenty of gas. Weather great. Fine visibility."

"Still game, dear. We'll never have a better chance."

"All right. Good luck, little girl. Wait a minute. I'll point her over beyond the field—no danger of hitting anybody with it then. Careful—folks below. All right. No one there. Now!"

At the signal, Betty Sheldon had calmly pulled out two bolts.

The landing gear dropped from the Sheldon plane.

Glenn and Betty had established the superiority of Samuel Sheldon's new ship by being the first above the San Francisco Air Field.

It was true that some other plane, if it finished, might be the technical winner and get the first prize, but that would go to the pilot. It would not interfere with the orders for planes that would literally pour into the plant of the Sheldon Company, no matter what happened from this point on.

It would simply be a question of the other plane's touching its wheels to the ground first, a technical but questionable victory.

These descendants of Icarus were taking the long chance. They had done what they could for Samuel Sheldon. Now they were setting out to make airplane history.

The Sheldon plane swooped over the water like a great sea bird, and headed for Honolulu. Between them and their goal was something like twenty-four hundred miles of leaping salt water.

The news of the daring hop flashed all over the world, and as if in greeting for this supreme act of courage, the sun burst out from behind a small cloud and silvered the wings of the speeding ship.

Long before they made Honolulu, if they did, darkness would fall again, but as in the case of the historic Lindbergh flight, would not "Darkness be made light by emprise?"

XI.

GLENN KERRY was keenly aware of the extreme hazard of the venture upon which he had set his heart several weeks before. Both he and Betty, and her brother Dick as well, had realized that with the massive strides made in aviation in recent years, and particularly in 1927, there was a strong possibility of perhaps half of the eight planes reaching San Francisco.

The daring flight of Lindbergh, who would ever remain king of the air no matter what subsequent air history might be made; the nearly two-thousand-mile hop of Alcock and Brown, as far back as 1910; the flights of Chamberlin and Levine, of Maitland and Hegensberger, of Brock and Schlee, and Byrd and other daring airmen of many countries—all these had had their effect in showing that the seemingly impossible was possible.

The several flights had shown that the conquest of great distances was not a mere accident—that they could be duplicated, and perhaps even exceeded. The situation had needed only some one to point the way.

Many a night, away from the ears of Samuel Sheldon, Glenn and Betty and Dick had discussed the possibility of making the Sheldon plane achieve a record non-stop flight over land and sea so that the feat would go rocketing around the world, and

deluge the Sheldon plant with orders, thus making the declining years of the courageous Samuel Sheldon years of affluence and pride.

All three had been fervent believers in the future of aviation, a faith which had been still farther strengthened after the surprising tests of the new Sheldon ship.

It was no hare-brained plan, then, that Glenn Kerry had embarked upon, but one which he believed could be made practicable, and one for which he had taken every precaution, under the circumstances, for the safety of himself and the girl who was risking her life with him there in the cockpit.

Through the connivance of Dick—who, as Betty had predicted, could keep a secret well—he had managed to pack away in the big plane a supply of rockets and flares as well as a collapsible lifeboat and even an extra propeller. Now, as he swooped out over the Pacific, he had the feeling that a plan carefully conceived is half accomplished, and he was overjoyed to see that the day was dawning crystal-clear for the second leg of his attempted flight, a leg somewhat over two thousand miles long.

He realized to the utmost the importance of good weather conditions. His danger was not only the danger of failing to cover the great distance; it also consisted in the fact that he was aiming at a target which he might never hit if he varied more than three degrees from his course.

If his compass went wrong, or he encountered storm, he would be in for a serious situation. Despite the power of his plane's engine, this was a far more hazardous proposition than a flight from Hawaii back to the mainland, or a flight between Europe and America, with the broad coast lines of each. His present objective was an island with a total area of less than six hundred square miles, a mere dot on the face of the Pacific.

Glenn Kerry was a believer in luck, not with the fervor of the superstitious, but with the mixture of reason and fatalism of the air enthusiast, who knows that considerable so-called luck can be created by nerve and skill—and that the rest is in the hands of Providence, and a good engine. He steered a compass course, occasionally throttling his

motor and calling words of encouragement to Betty.

He was passing considerable shipping, and he knew that he would be reported regularly by vessels for the first few hundred miles at least. Both he and Betty realized that the eyes of the world were upon them, and that back there over thousands of miles of land and water an old man and a young one were waiting for every word—men, they realized, who were nervous now, but who, with the successful end of their venture, would know the joy that comes to few.

As the plane skimmed along, Glenn noticed a thin fog that all but veiled the surface of the water. It began to rise steadily, still veiling the ocean, and Glenn started to climb until he reached an altitude of six thousand feet.

As he ran into clear air now and then, he saw the smoke of an occasional liner, and sometimes managed to pass near it. Just before a thick and continuous haze engulfed his plane he passed an immense liner, smoke pouring from her funnels, evidently bound for San Francisco or Seattle.

The first mishap of an almost perfect flight occurred when, shortly after this, his radio went out of commission; then, as the mist became thicker and thicker, he soared higher and higher. Great rents began to appear in the fog as he flew on, and he was overjoyed to see, finally, that the water was once more visible beneath him.

He lowered the altitude of his plane. The temperature had become somewhat warmer now, minimizing the danger of wing sleet, which he had feared for a time.

He passed a Japanese steamship, which greeted him with three blasts of its whistle, and as he circled the ship, he could see the rails lined with passengers.

As the sun rose higher in the heavens the mist cleared entirely, and he dropped down even closer to the water and sailed along smoothly. His barometer told him that a storm was brewing.

He throttled his motor and called back to Betty: "Everything all right, dear. Radio out, but the compass is O K. Wind's at our back, too. Nothing to worry about, dear."

"You know it, dear!" came the cheery reply.

But for the first time since he had seen the strange maneuvering of the rival plane in the first hour of his flight, Glenn Kerry's face showed a look of concern. His barometer indicated that he was flying into the storm.

The rain came in great floods from the sky and beat so hard against the plane that it could be heard even above the roar of the motor and the air blast. It pelted against the propeller and seeped in over the windshield.

He made an attempt to get above the storm by soaring to more than ten thousand feet, but when the thermometer began to drop sharply, he came down again for fear that ice would form on his wings and weigh him down. It was during this climb that the coffee in the vacuum flask became so chilled that it was useless for the balance of the flight.

But troubles are all comparative. Cold coffee at a snug dining room table is a calamity; but here were greater problems.

As darkness came on, the wind howled and the rain continued to pour down. There was an unintelligible shout from Betty. He throttled the motor to hear her.

"Don't go to sleep, dear!" came the half bantering instruction of the courageous girl in the cockpit. Somehow, this bantering tone of the girl inspirited him more than anything else could have done.

Indeed, there was no danger of going to sleep. It would have been impossible to sleep. The storm was entirely too violent.

Looking out of the cockpit into the dark night was like glancing into a pool of ink. But Glenn Kerry pressed on without fear.

Here was to be a real battle with the elements, a battle no less trying than those in which he had engaged over the lines during the war. Then he was a soldier of his country; now he was a knight as chivalrous as any who jousting centuries ago. He was breaking a lance for the advancement of his lady, jousting with fate for the glory of the Sheldon interests.

His compass was working all right. His consumption had been low; only a third of his supply had been used on the flight

thus far. More than with anything else, Glenn was pleased at the low gas consumption, which had been economized by the new air-valve invention.

His plane had well over a hundred gallons of fuel left, at ten miles to the gallon enough for well over a thousand miles—enough to reach the island of Oahu if he could run out of the storm and Providence was on his side.

XII.

BACK in New Brunswick an old man and his son were drinking in every report of the unprecedented air venture, Dick Sheldon with the bright optimism of youth, his father with the touch of fear that comes with age and the rude batterings of life.

Their radio was on continuously, in order that they might not miss a single one of the periodical reports coming from a powerful station in New York City and relayed over the entire country by means of a hook-up. Sometimes the older man dozed, only to awake with a nervous start at the tones of the announcer.

Dick, looking very sleepy, but nevertheless bright-eyed, had found that his nervous system would not allow him to sleep. These reports were important to the whole world, but they had a keen personal edge for these two listeners in New Brunswick. This is what they heard:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Station WLX. It is officially announced that the Trico plane, by being the first to set its wheels on the ground at Crissy Field, San Francisco, wins the first prize of twenty-five thousand dollars in the sensational non-stop transcontinental race. The Caldwell entry, the only other plane to complete the trip and to land, is the winner of the second prize of ten thousand dollars."

"But we'll win the prize of fifty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Dick, trying to keep up the waning spirits of his father. "And, dad, you'd better get ready for those orders that will be pouring in. Your ship made it first. Not landing was a mere technicality—to cop a bigger prize."

"If I could have my daughter right here, Dick," replied the older man, "I think I'd almost quit the business entirely."

"What? Nonsense! You're no quitter, dad. Why, I just feel that this prize is in our hands right now."

He was nervous, though. While his father dozed, he camped before the radio. Reports were being given out every half hour, and on special occasions every fifteen minutes.

The first report of the Sheldon plane after it had passed over Crissy Field was as follows: "A little over an hour after it passed over Crissy Field, San Francisco, the Sheldon plane was reported over the Farallon Islands, bound for Honolulu and the General Worth standing prize of fifty thousand dollars, for a New York to Honolulu flight. The weather is reported as fair and clear."

"Hooray!" yelled Dick.

Through the long afternoon the two sat before the radio. Reports came in from time to time, reports that were denied and then confirmed, and then denied again; reports of scattered fog, sent in by ships; of a San Francisco bound ship running into a severe storm and out again. The Sheldon plane had been reported passing over a Japanese vessel over three hundred miles from the California coast; three hours later it was again reported, now practically seven hundred miles at sea. A later report from a ship stated that the plane was evidently attempting to get radio bearings.

Samuel Sheldon, at the urging of Dick, had gone into a side room and had stretched himself, fully clothed, on a day bed. The older man was plainly showing the marks of worry and strain. He quickly fell into a fitful sleep, occasionally calling in to his son for a word of the flyers.

Long into the night sat Dick Sheldon before the radio.

"Station WLX," came the announcement. "It is stated officially by the Los Angeles to Honolulu liner Aloha that a severe storm is raging in mid-Pacific, and no word has been heard for nearly two hours from the gallant couple who are attempting the mammoth flight from New York to Honolulu. It is feared that—"

From the other room came Samuel Sheldon's voice. "What's the report, Dick?" he asked nervously.

Exercising considerable will power, Dick Sheldon pressed the switch which snapped off the radio.

"Everything seems to be going all right, dad," he replied, affecting a cheeriness he was far from feeling. "Now try to get some real sleep. That's the final report until morning. Remember, dad, it's a Sheldon plane and has as its passenger a Sheldon—and a Sheldon-in-law. I'm going to bed myself."

But Dick Sheldon did not go to bed. He tiptoed over and removed the plug from the wall socket. Then, realizing that in his absence—for he meant to be absent—his father might awaken and discover the trickery, and plug in again, he hobbled down cellar and removed a fuse from the switch box.

He hobbled back again with a lighted candle, and found that his father was still awake.

"Too bad. A fuse blew out," he lied cheerfully. "We'll get it fixed in the morning. Too late to have it done now. Good night, dad. Try not to worry. It's going to be all right. You'll be a proud man to-morrow."

Soon after, when he heard his father's regular breathing, he took his crutches and made his way slowly out of the house. He picked up a wandering night taxi and rode to a newspaper office, and through the night read the dismal reports that came through—that the storm over the Pacific had increased in violence, and that only by a miracle of aeronautics could the Sheldon plane hope to be still in the air.

For the first time fear struck deeply into the heart of Dick Sheldon. Had he, after all, done right in being a party to the plan of Glenn and his sister Betty? Had he not, perhaps, been a victim to their unbelievably infectious optimism? He sat there smoking nervously, waiting for some report that might bring back a vestige of hope.

But the only report that came was one that fairly froze the blood in his veins. A message was received over the press association wire that an amateur radio operator had claimed to have a flash from a ship in the Pacific. The ship's radio operator, ran the report, had picked up a call for help

from the aviators, who were being forced down. The ship had answered at once, but had received no reply, and had not been able to locate any trace of the flyers.

Dick Sheldon thought of that little collapsible rubber boat, which might keep the flyers afloat for a time in a smooth sea, but would be helpless in a storm. He felt like an accomplice in some heinous crime. His optimism of weeks had been put completely to rout.

Word had come over the wire that Philip Hatton, the Trico head, had been recognized in Montreal, it was believed, but had disappeared before his recognition could be made certain. But this piece of news, which once would have been so important, seemed highly unimportant to Dick now.

He hobbled home shortly after six in the morning, almost afraid to face his father. He looked dazedly at a clock. Six o'clock here, and daylight. But wherever Glenn and his sister were out there in the Pacific, it would still be pitch dark and several hours earlier. But did time not matter to these two dauntless ones who had loved danger, and might by now have perished of it.

XIII.

THE next day, however, the gloom in Dick Sheldon's heart had changed to a gleam of joy.

In the first place, the report of the amateur radio operator had proved to be an admitted fake—the mouthings of a young man trying to get publicity, regardless of how he got it. And besides this negatively hopeful report came the announcement from the Sheldon radio:

"Station WLX. There is an official report from a navy radio station in San Francisco, advised through radio from Honolulu, that a plane had been sighted by a navy destroyer three hundred and fifty miles from Honolulu. The ship tried to connect by radio, it was stated, but there was no answer, which led to the belief that the plane's radio might be out of commission. Otherwise, however, it was going strong. It had flown out of the storm, which still continues through a considerable strip of the Pacific."

As the day wore on, Dick's spirits rapidly rose to their high mark of a few weeks before. A wired request for an immediate conference had come to Samuel Sheldon from the manufacturer of a perishable product interested in getting its product quickly into the hands of retail dealers—a forerunner of the tremendous commercial possibilities to come.

Another telegram came from the publisher of a prominent magazine edited in one city and printed in another—hailing swift airplane service as an aid for last-minute pages.

Samuel Sheldon's old eyes took on a greater brilliance as the favorable reports of the flight poured in as well as premature congratulations from commanding officers of air fields, from friends, from the heads of the Christensen and the Caldwell Aircraft Corporations.

Samuel Sheldon's lips were moving in prayers of hope and thanksgiving. It was only when one telegram came that he gave vent to an unprayerful remark. That was when he opened an envelope containing a dispatch dated from New York, which ran:

Congratulations from a friendly associate. I have had confidence in the Sheldon ship from the start, and that confidence is now stronger than ever. Best luck.

The telegram was signed by Philip Hatton!

It was characteristic of Hatton, now in hiding, to give this evidence of his consummate brass as he stood on the very brink of prison.

A few hours before dawn, having flown through the worst of the storm, Glenn Kerry passed a destroyer, and fifty miles farther on passed still another—a hopeful sign to him that these guardians of the seas had been notified from the nearest naval station to spread themselves out along the course, and that he was still in direct line with Honolulu, although the storm had veered him somewhat out of his course a few hours earlier.

The stars were incandescent overhead. But as he flew on west and a little south,

the star that set Glenn Kerry's heart thumping was a brilliant light almost dead ahead that kept flashing and receding, flashing and receding.

From his charts he believed this to be the powerful Makapuu Point Light on the extreme eastern end of the island of Oahu.

He throttled down his motor again.

"Shall we stop at this next station, dear?" he asked flippantly. "Or continue on to Shanghai?"

A laugh from Betty was the answer.

As the plane flew along, the aviators could discern lights to the left of them, which Glenn believed to be the coast line of Molokai.

He had dropped his compass course now and was speeding on toward that powerful light, skimming on and on, around Leahi, or Diamond Head, and then veered in over the land. He was without landing gear, but he had made plans for that.

His speed had ranged from sixty-five to a hundred and thirty miles an hour, and now, with his lightened gas load, he even exceeded this latter figure at times, slowing down, however, as he passed over a hotel with a huge illuminated arrow on its roof, indicating the direction of Wheeler Field, Honolulu. Following the direction of the arrow he flew over and circled about the field, where flares were alight.

He passed over the field, circled about it again, and as he throttled his motor and swung low he heard a loud cheer go up from below, and the sound of countless automobile horns. Romantic Hawaii was preparing to give a rousing welcome to the first plane to reach its capital in a non-stop flight from New York.

The American flag was fluttering proudly from a tall pole at the corner of the field, its brilliant coloring picked out in the glow of a spotlight directed full upon it.

Glenn darted low over the hangars, swung up again like a swallow, swooped about again and flew back to the beach and over the ocean. The first streaks of dawn had come. Below could be seen the soft green of cane fields and the vivid yellow of salt grass and the fringe of coconut trees, and back of the city the Koolau

range broke majestically through the opalescent mist.

Years before, during his rigorous training to become a pilot in the air force of the United States army, Glenn had been trained to land within a certain radius with his motor shut off. He was now selecting a desirable spot inside the reef where the breakers creamed and then went curling and bounding on toward the golden beach.

His plane was equipped with the modern dump-valve that would enable him to dump his entire remaining load of fuel within one minute. Many planes are so equipped, so that in over-water flights, if forced down without mishap, the air in the tanks will keep the plane afloat for a considerable period, barring turbulent seas.

He dumped his gasoline, and then throttled his motor.

"We've won, dear!" he called back to Betty.

"We've won, dear!" came the girl's voice like an echo. "Dad will be so proud!"

Down like a great seabird swooped the Sheldon plane, and skimmed the water lightly. A few moments later it was on the crescent beach, lined with people, and with a military guard about it.

A short time before, the idea of a New York to Honolulu flight had been a flight of fancy—a page from one of the books of Jules Verne. Now it was an accomplished fact. An American plane had flown from America's greatest city to America's greatest island paradise.

Later in the day, in clean, dry clothing, very sleepy, but very happy, Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Kerry sat down to an elaborate dinner of tropical fruits and viands in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Air corps officers, notables, naval officers, newspaper men thronged the place. Outside a larger crowd of whites, Hawaiians and Orientals set up a shout of welcome.

A radiogram was handed to Glenn Kerry. It proved to be from General Worth, the owner of a chain of American super-hotels, and stated that the fifty thousand dollar prize was his as the first successful flyer to make the hop from New York to Honolulu.

"This is a typographical error," said Glenn, smiling. "It says I'm worth fifty thousand dollars, but it's not correct. Twenty-five of it belongs to you, Betty."

"You mean that you are giving me twenty-five dollars?" asked Betty, with the light of banter in her gray eyes.

"Twenty-five thousand. You were my mascot—and my inspiration."

That afternoon Glenn escaped from the crowd while Betty slept, and spent some time going over his plane, testing the engine, the controls and rigging.

"I'll take a little nap," he said. "Everything on the plane is in perfect order, except the radio, and I've fixed that now. Are you ready for that flight to Shanghai?"

Betty grew suddenly imperious.

"I am not ready," she replied. "We're starting back on the next ship to my daddy.

This radiogram came from him while you were out there. He's the proudest man in America."

Late that afternoon a tall, blond young man and a pretty brunette were disporting in the surf at Waikiki. The young man gazed over the bright waters toward Diamond Head, and looked at the muscular figures of golden-skinned Hawaiians standing erect on surf-boards and tobogganing the full length of long waves.

He was thinking that a surf board could be far more treacherous than an airplane. He did not believe he'd try it just yet.

The whole world was ringing with the praise of Glenn Kerry, but as that modest young man turned and saw his bride dive into a translucent wave and come up a smiling Aphrodite he was wondering how this goddess could fall for an ordinary young fellow like himself.

THE END



HOMESICK COWBOY

APPETITE'S gone plumb to nothin'

An' there's no joy in a smoke,

While folks are winkin' an' sayin',

"Ain't he a sour-faced bloke?"

But they ain't chaperoned cattle

Over th' grass with th' breeze,

As a good bronc did his steppin'

To th' say-so of their knees.

Though I am hearin' folks laughin',

As they are playin' th' game;

Though they are jokin' an' jestin',

I get no kick from th' same,

For, while I wearily wander

With th' harsh clangor of cars,

Lord, I am hearin' th' prairies

Whisper th' low-hangin' stars.

I am grown sick of th' city,

Tired of all th' mad throngs;

Out where there's room for cavortin'

That's where yours truly belongs,

But pretty soon I'll be happy,

For I am turnin' from men

An' their fool talk to be knowin'

Herds an' their bawlin' again.

Edgar Daniel Kramer.



Queen of Clubs

By **HULBERT FOOTNER**

Author of "The Under Dogs," "Madame Storey in the Tails," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I

KNOWN all her life as the "twenty-million-dollar-baby" because her parents died and left that neat sum in trust through Attorney Minturn, Carola Goadby had found life insufferably dull and sickeningly sweet; so, on her twenty-first birthday she discharged all her servants and chaperons that represented her caged existence, and started in quest of excitement. She retained her bodyguard, McQuissick, who exposed Minturn's attempt to get power of attorney over her money. Breaking with Minturn, she asked the advice of a cheap little lawyer, A. Zuckert, who was honest—though misguided—and who turned her over to the only man of importance he knew—Marcus Breedon. Breedon was the hidden power in the highest circles of theatricals, sports, gambling, restaurants, night clubs, and such. He counseled Carola to check up Minturn's report of her securities, deposit them and draw the interest, and let herself be guided by him. Earlier in the day Breedon had engaged on his enormous staff of diversified retainers one Len Farley, recently of Sing Sing, a powerfully built, handsome, dare-devil sort of chap, to dance with rich ladies at the Elysia Night Club. . . . Carola rode home feeling happy at her independence and at the friendship of such a prominent individual. When she alighted from the taxi a group of men rushed at her.

CHAPTER VI (Continued).

IN THE HANDS OF THE LION.

CAROLA was frightened half out of her wits. They were armed with clumsy looking boxes and long tripods that they managed with extraordinary dexterity. They planted their tripods and

pointed their boxes at her. Some ran up the steps of the house; some even dived between the legs of the others to get a point of vantage.

They were as quick as insects. With a terrified glance around her, Carola ran up the steps and beat on the door with her fists. She had no latchkey. Fortunately

This story began in the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* for November 5.

McQuissick must have been waiting on the other side of it. She ran in gasping.

"Oh, what are they, Mr. McQuissick?"

"Newspaper photographers, miss. They've been hanging about the house all afternoon."

Carola dropped on a hall chair, and laughed weakly at her own fears. Such was the beginning of her fame.

Almost immediately the doorbell rang again. "This will be the reporters," said McQuissick grimly. "They're waiting, too."

A fresh panic seized on Carola. "I shan't see them," she said quickly. Then she remembered Breedon's advice. "Yes, I will see them. Oh, Mr. McQuissick, what should I do?"

McQuissick scratched his head. "Darned if I know," he said helplessly, "I'm not the one to advise a young girl. You ought to have a—"

Carola jumped and stamped her foot. "Don't you say chaperone, or you and I will no longer be friends!"

McQuissick grinned. "Well, I'll see the newspaper men for you," he said. "This story has got to be contradicted." He pulled a newspaper from his pocket. It was one of the small newspapers full of photographs that Carola had seen on the news-stands, but which had never come to the house. She had been led to understand that they were not nice newspapers, but they looked exciting.

"What is that?" she said, taking the paper.

"Go into the drawing-room and read it," said McQuissick. "I'll see these guys in the library."

When Carola unfolded the sheet she was astonished to find a large photograph on the front page. Where could they have got it? Over the photograph in staring black letters was the caption:

**TWENTY MILLION DOLLAR HEIRESS
SHOWS HER SPUNK**

Then in letters just a little smaller:

Carola Goadby Makes the Fur Fly

How unspeakably vulgar! What followed was a garbled and sensational ac-

count of the scene in her house that morning. As she read on a red spot appeared in either cheek, and her eyes glittered. She was represented as a perfect little ter-magant. Infamous! How on earth had the story got in the newspaper? Then a phrase gave her the clew. It had evidently been carried to the newspaper office by one of the discharged servants, who had no doubt been paid a good price for it. Oh, infamous!

Carola was so angry that she opened the door and marched into the library with the paper in her hand. McQuissick was in the act of explaining to the assembled reporters that Miss Goadby couldn't be seen, when she appeared. He threw up his hands, and the reporters laughed. There were about a dozen men of assorted ages and conditions, and a sprinkling of women. They immediately began to bombard Carola with questions. It was utterly confusing. She looked at McQuissick for help.

"Hey, cut it out!" he cried, waving his hands. "One at a time! One at a time!"

The reporters consulted among themselves, but appeared to be unable to come to an agreement. Finally the oldest man appealed to Carola. "You choose one of us to interview you, Miss Goadby."

Carola looked them over; the women she did not care for; they looked too sure of themselves. Of the men her attention was attracted by a good looking young fellow not so many years older than herself, who was frankly posing to catch her eye. He had an engaging grin.

"You may question me," said Carola.

He flashed a triumphant look at his confreres. "I see that you have read the story about yourself in the *Globe*," he began briskly. "Is it true?"

By this time Carola had got her head again. "Do I look like that kind of person?" she asked.

There was a general laugh, and the whispering of pencils. "Didn't you fire your servants?" asked the young man.

"I did," said Carola. "Evidently this newspaper buys its news from discharged servants."

"Easy! Easy!" whispered McQuissick behind her. "That's libelous."

"That's all right, Mr. McQuissick," sang the young man. "We won't let her down." To Carola he said: "Didn't you give Mitchell Minturn the air?"

"I don't understand you," said Carola.

The young man illustrated with a gesture. "Didn't you fire him?"

I mustn't injure Mr. Minturn in the newspapers, thought Carola. "Certainly not," she said coolly; "Mr. Minturn took care of my property all these years at a sacrifice to himself. Now that I have come of age he has his other business to attend to."

The young man gave her a quick smile as from one good sport to another. "Good stuff," he said, and scribbled rapidly on his wad of copy paper.

"Is it nice to come into your own money?" he next asked.

"That's a silly question," said Carola. "Of course it is."

"How much have you got?"

"I don't know. And I wouldn't tell you if I did. I won't answer that kind of question."

He was perfectly unabashed by her rebuke. "What are you going to do with it?" he asked.

Oh, if he thinks he's so smart, I can be smart, too, thought Carola. "What would you suggest?" she drawled.

He laughed delightedly. "Fine stuff! We'll ask our readers for suggestions."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned McQuissick behind Carola. "We'll have to hire a hall to handle our mail in."

"Well, invite your readers to send their suggestions to the paper, and not to me," said Carola.

Many questions of a personal nature followed that Carola steadily refused to answer. Finally she said:

"Here I am. You must make up your minds about me according to your own observations. I'm not going to give myself away."

There was more laughter, and a voice from amid the group said: "You're all right, Carola!"

Finally the young man put his paper in his pocket and said: "That closes the joint interview. Now I want to make a per-

sonal request. Will you grant me a special interview for a full page story in our Sunday edition?"

Carola liked his boldness, but had no intention of giving in to it. "Certainly not," she said. "No special interviews to anybody. I would hate to see myself spread all over a whole page."

There was a general laugh at the young man's expense, but perfectly good natured. "I like this crowd," thought Carola, "they can give and take." The young man laughed as loud as any.

"Well, can we come to see you again in a body?" he asked. "Something tells me you will be making news."

"Certainly," said Carola, "delighted to see you at any time."

McQuissick, feeling that this was a good exit line for her, opened the door and she slipped out into the hall.

"You did fine!" he whispered to her as she passed him. "After this you'll have these birds eatin' out of your hand!"

Carola ran upstairs.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE INSIDE WORKS.

LEN FARLEY found his new life comfortable, but dull. The manager of the Elysia Night Club, M. Paul Chablon, engaged him at a glance. Len's instinct told him that this polished and experienced restaurateur was only a figurehead at Elysia; Marcus Breedon was the real boss there. It was something everybody knew, and nobody mentioned.

M. Chablon told Len that he would not be expected to start work until he became proficient in dancing. It was arranged that he was to take a lesson from Miss Adelaide Sanders every afternoon on the dance floor at Elysia before the place opened for business. Len might have got some fun out of these lessons; but, unfortunately, Miss Sanders proved to be a woman of forty, thin and embittered.

She could dance like a dream, but she had lost her looks. Her cynicism was proof against all Len's jollyng. She was sore on men. He soon gave her up.

Aside from his daily lesson, his time was his own. He was provided with a room and meals at the Mackinac Hotel, but no money. The fifty dollars that Breedon gave him the first day melted away like ice in the sun. Well, he had to buy himself a tortoise shell cigarette case, a lighter, an ivory-headed stick and other things that went with his new character. For a few days it was grand to fluff about in good clothes with nothing to worry about, and then it began to pall on him.

Len had considerable steam to let off, and day by day the pressure rose. He began to lay on weight, a thing he hated in himself. My figure is my fortune, he said grimly to himself as he looked in the glass. Moreover, it was galling to a young man of spirit never to be able to buy. Might as well be somebody's tame sheep! he grumbled.

He made the mistake of speaking to Marcus Breedon about it. "Say, boss, I'm flat broke. If you could only let me have the money it costs to keep me in this joint, I could live cheaper outside, and have a little coin to spend."

"What have I got to do with it?" asked Breedon with a hard look. "You're workin' for Chablon."

M. Chablon when appealed to, spread out his hands and shrugged expressively. "When you start work, your pay starts," he said. "What's the matter with you? Miss Sanders says you will make a good dancer soon."

"All right if I don't go nutty first," muttered Len.

He was now recognized as a member of Breedon's crowd, and as such had plenty of company around the hotel. Queer fish! I thought I knew life, Len said to himself, but I'm only a beginner! Men of all ages and every complexion, nearly every nationality in Europe was represented among them. They were alike in one thing only, and that was the superior quality of the smoothness they exhibited.

They had a certain common meeting ground of talk in which they exercised themselves fluently, beyond that, mum! Queer half hints would be dropped; but no man ever asked another a question. All

private communications were saved for the old man's ear. These men turned up at the hotel in endless succession, hung about for a day or two, and dropped out of sight as mysteriously as they had appeared. Others were regular habitués of the lobby. Good-God! What a team Breedon drives, thought Len. Is there no end to it?

By degrees he became pals with a little fellow named Charley Marden, who, like himself, lived in the hotel. They were the same age. Charley was a slick, thin little fellow, who could pass for a high school kid when necessary. It was very useful to him. Now Breedon was generally away from the hotel at night, and the place was dead.

Neither Charley nor Len had any money to spend and they got into the way of passing the time at night by smoking and chinning in each other's rooms. Very cagey with each other at first, they gradually became confidential. It turned out that Charley had turned a couple of tricks in his time, just the same as Len. Finally one night with justifiable pride, Charley described how he had robbed a bank in the West.

"God!" said Len. "I wish I had something on right now. I'm dying of dry rot, kid."

"The old man 'll take care of you," said Charley soothingly.

"That's all right," said Len, "if I don't go bugs first. I can't stand this life. I got to have action."

"That's funny, now," said Charley thoughtfully. "It just happens now that I got an elegant tip a couple of days ago. I can't use it myself. It seems a kind of a shame it should go to waste."

"What is it?" asked Len eagerly.

"Say, if you're workin' for the old man, you want to keep off it, too, fellow."

"Ah! I ain't workin' for Breedon," said Len. "Anyhow, he says I ain't."

"Well, it's like this," said Charley, "fella I know, a good friend of mine, made a bunch of money last week out of a shipment of hootch, and he put a part of it into a pair of elegant diamond earrings for the wife. Regular searchlights, they are; set him back a cool three thousand bones.

"Well, the old woman won't wear them out of the house at night, 'cause she's scared somebody might tear them out of her ears, see? And next Saturday night they asked me to go out to dinner with them, and take in a show.

"They don't keep no servant, and all the time we're out, those shining babies will be lying in the little inside drawer of the desk in their parlor. It's a walk-up apartment; no bell boys or nothin' to interfere with you. What's more, they keep a spare latchkey hangin' behind the door. I'm in and out of their flat all the time. I could take an impression of the key, and have one made for you before Saturday."

"My God, what a cinch!" said Len with a brightening eye. Then his face darkened. "But, gee, what a rotten deal for you to hand your friend! Ain't you got no conscience?"

"What do you think I am?" said Charley with seeming indignation. "The diamonds are insured. The insurance company will have to put up for them. That's what an insurance company's for. It's nobody's loss and our gain. We'll split fifty-fifty on it."

"All right, I'm on," said Len. "Will you get rid of the stuff? I ain't had no experience with diamonds."

"You take 'em direct to Mother Mitcheson," said Charley. "I'll give you her address. If we wait till morning the alarm will be out for them. She'll give you a thousand for them."

"Is that all?" said Len. "And they're worth three?"

"What do you expect?" said Charley. "Nobody would do more."

They went on discussing the affair in all its details.

Saturday night came, and the affair was carried through as planned, without a hitch. This is sure a cinch if there ever was one, Len said to himself. He sold the diamonds to Mother Mitcheson that same night, and when he got back to the hotel, he handed Charley his share of the proceeds. They had a little quiet celebration before they sought their respective beds.

Early Sunday morning before Charley was out of bed, the big fellow himself visited him in his room. "Well?" he asked curtly.

"O K, boss," said Charley. "Our young friend walked right into it."

"You had your witness placed all right?"

"Surest thing you know. I got an affidavit from him in case of accidents. Couldn't get a notary at that time of night, but you can easy fix that up."

Breedon took the paper that Charley handed him and read:

Martin, being sworn desposes and says: My name is Martin. I live at 985 West Eighty-Fifth Street. On the night of October 21, as I was coming home at 10.30 P.M., I saw a young fellow loafing in the apartment house where I live, and I didn't like his looks. After I got into my apartment, hearing a suspicious noise in the hall, I opened my door a crack and looked out and I saw this same young fellow letting himself into the apartment opposite to mine with a key.

I am acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Witmer, who occupy that apartment, and as I had never seen him with them, I suspected that he was up to no good. So I went through my parlor, and got out on the fire escape that runs between my parlor window and the Witmer's.

I looked through the Witmer's window, and I saw the young fellow go to the desk in there, and take Mrs. Witmer's diamond earrings. I saw the diamonds sparkle when he opened them up. As soon as I saw what he was up to, I went back through my flat, and downstairs to call a policeman, but the thief was too quick for me.

He got out of the house before I did, and I couldn't find him. But I could identify him anywhere. Young fellow about twenty-five years old; height about six feet; weight about one hundred and eighty. Black hair, black eyes, bold face; very well dressed.

(Signed) MARTIN.

"H-m! Not so bad!" said Breedon with a grim smile. "The alarm will be given to-day, and the insurance company will be hot on the trail of the thief. If anybody should steer this witness up against Len at any time—" He paused, grinning.

Charley was not grinning. "Sure," he said sullenly. "Boss," he went on, "Len sure is a square head, and clever as hell. I'd hate to see any harm come to him through this."

"Why, so would I, Charley; so would I," said Breedon with an appearance of great heartiness. "I look on Len as one of the brightest young fellers I've got. I expect

great things of him." He shook the folded paper. "This is just a precautionary measure, see? As long as Len is a good boy and does what he's told, it will just gather dust in my safe. I ain't goin' to spoil the usefulness of a good man. But if he should get ugly, and try to gum the works, well, that's what this is for."

Charley nodded, not entirely reassured.

"Now, you can make out you've been sent away on orders, see?" Breedon went on. "Get up and get out of here, and wait for further instructions in the place you know of. You can leave a note for your friend if you want."

Len never saw Charley again.

CHAPTER VIII.

EMANCIPATION.

IT appeared that Mr. McQuissick had managed very well, considering his lack of experience in household matters. When Carola got home she found a complete set of new servants installed and functioning smoothly. They were under the direction of a depressed looking housekeeper called Mrs. Tylee. Though not exactly prepossessing, she was undoubtedly efficient.

She received Carola's orders with downcast eyes, and carried them out without comment. Upstairs Carola found her new maid in attendance, by name, Ella. She did not care much for her looks; too pale and mousey looking. "I'll get something livelier later," thought Carola.

Ella was waiting around for orders, and a curious blankness descended on Carola. All her life long every waking hour had been filled for her by others, and now that she was her own mistress she didn't know how to act for herself. What would she do until dinner time? She tried to remember some of the things she had promised herself she would do when she became free. All she could think of was smoking a cigarette. Why hadn't she bought any when she was out?

"I wish I had a cigarette," she said.

"I might be able to get some in the house," said Ella, demurely.

Carola looked at her with a fresh interest. Maybe she was human after all. Her pale face betrayed no expression. "Well, see if you can," said Carola.

Ella, as demure and noncommittal as ever, presently returned with a packet of cigarettes. "They're only cheap ones," she said deprecatingly.

"Doesn't matter," said Carola. "Where did you get them?"

"From the second man," said Ella, with just the suspicion of a dimple in her pale cheek.

"I bet they have fun among themselves," thought Carola with a little sigh; "they are not hampered by conventions." She broke the packet, and abstracted a cigarette. Ella, she noticed, was looking around for something. "What is it?" Carola asked.

"The lighter."

"I haven't any."

Ella lit a match and held it to the cigarette. Carola endeavored to take her first puffs like an old hand, but the maid saw through her. "Don't inhale at first, miss," she said.

"What do you mean by inhale?"

"Draw the smoke into your lungs and blow it out through your nostrils."

"Mercy! I'll be glad enough if I can blow it out of my mouth without choking," said Carola. "Draw the chaise longue in front of the cheval glass so I can practice how to do it properly," she added.

Watching herself in the mirror, she strove to do it as nonchalantly as the women who had surrounded her in the fashionable restaurant. How lightly they had held the little tube between first and second fingers, flicking the ash off with the third! And what a graceful aid the gesticulating cigarette provided to conversation! It will take a lot of practice, Carola decided.

In the middle of this she heard McQuissick asking for her at the door. Her impulse was to hide the cigarette, but she resisted it. He might as well know soon as late, she said to herself. I'm not going to let Mr. Quissick or anybody else run me. "Come in!" she sang out.

McQuissick looked at the cigarette without batting an eye.

"Have one?" Carola said carelessly.

"No, thanks," said he. "I just wanted to tell you that Mr. Minturn called up three times when you were out. He asked me to call him as soon as you got back."

"Oh, bother!" said Carola. "I thought I was through with him."

McQuissick said nothing.

Much against her will, Carola was forced to ask for advice. "What must I do about Mr. Minturn?"

"Well, miss, since you ask me," said McQuissick cautiously, "I should say keep him by you. He's had a jolt, Mitchell Minturn has; he's feeling real humble-minded now. If you can keep him in his place, he'd be a valuable man to have around you."

I must not do anything without consulting Mr. Breedon, thought Carola. "Well, tell him I'm too tired to talk business to-night, but I'll see him in the morning," said Carola.

McQuissick nodded. "Here's a list of your social engagements that Mrs. Van Arsdale left for you," he said, and went away to telephone.

Carola studied the list with strong distaste. Dinner at General Rampayne's; dance of the Knickerbocker Association at the Madagascar; Mr. Percival Papp's musical morning; lunch at Mrs. Frelinghuysen's; tea at Mrs. Bramsby Lincoln's, and so on. How well Carola knew the round. As soon as you completed it, you started over. She tossed the list on a table.

McQuissick returned to say that Mr. Minturn would call upon her at eleven next day. "He wanted to come at nine," said the detective with a twinkle; "but I took the liberty of putting him off."

"Quite right," said Carola. "You're such a help to me, Mr. McQuissick." She picked up the list. "Now I wish you'd telephone to all these people and tell them I can't come to their stupid parties."

"But what 'll I say?" objected McQuissick, a little aghast.

"Say anything you like. What is it they always say? Say I'm indisposed. That's perfectly true."

"But how would they know who I was?"

"Write to them, then," said Carola impatiently. "Write a note to each one, and I'll sign it."

McQuissick ran a hand through his hair. "I can't," he said helplessly.

"You can't write?"

"Sure I can write, but I don't know how to put it to fashionable folks."

Bother the man, thought Carola. How different he was from Mr. Breedon, who made everything so easy for her. "Put it any way you like," she said, "as long as you make it clear that I'm not coming."

McQuissick went out with a hand in his hair.

Presently the new butler came to the door of Carola's boudoir. She never did learn this man's name; he only stayed one day. He had come to announce that Mrs. Frelinghuysen was calling. Carola's heart sunk.

"What did you tell her?" she asked sharply.

"Said I'd see if you was in, miss."

"Then she'll know I'm in."

"Sorry, miss, but I had no orders."

"Tell her I'm sick, and beg to be excused."

"Yes, miss." He went away.

In three minutes he came padding softly along the corridor again. "She says she'll come right up, miss, if she may."

Carola jumped up. "Damn the woman!" she said. It was the first time she had ever sworn out loud. The sound of it gave her courage. "I'll go down to her," she said, with the light of battle in her eyes.

Carola put her cigarette away. On second thoughts, she lighted a fresh one, and went downstairs puffing. Mrs. Frelinghuysen, withered and elegant, was sitting in the blue drawing-room with a consciously sweet expression. Her face changed in the most comical manner when she saw the cigarette. She swallowed hard, but said nothing about it.

"My dear, when I read that terrible story in the newspaper I came to you at once."

"Oh, do you read that paper?" asked Carola sweetly.

"Not as a rule," said Mrs. Frelinghuysen.

sen. "One of the maids brought it to me. Now, darling, Ronald and I want you to come to us, until you get your house in running order again. We will not take no for an answer."

"Thank you," said Carola, "but my house is running all right as far as I can see. I appear to have the usual number of servants."

"And a chaperon?" asked Mrs. Frelinghuysen.

"No chaperon," said Carola blandly.

"Well, dear, there's my cousin, Maria Kip. One of the Hamilton Kips, you know. Maria, I know, would drop everything and come to you at whatever sacrifice to herself."

"I'm sure she would," said Carola.

"Shall I wire to her, dear?"

"No, thank you. I'm not going to have a chaperon."

"But my dear!" gasped Mrs. Frelinghuysen, running up the aristocratic eyebrows into two little Gothic arches.

"Well?" said Carola calmly.

Mrs. Frelinghuysen thought of the twenty million dollars, and her eyebrows climbed down again. "Perhaps you are right," she said. "I was only thinking of all the talk it would make. I expect there will be reams more about you in the newspapers tomorrow."

"Oh, yes," said Carola, "I have just interviewed all the reporters in a body. Such amusing fellows."

Mrs. Frelinghuysen stared, and the eyebrows undulated like little black waves. But she drew a long breath for patience, and went on with determined sweetness—she prided herself on being a woman of resource:

"I tell you what, Carola; let you and I and Ronnie take a little trip until this blows over. The Octavius is sailing on Saturday. Taormina, my dear, or Amalfi, or Sorrento. Rome later. Your trustees would never allow you to be taken abroad; the responsibility was too great. Now you are free to taste those deights."

"You are awfully kind," said Carola; "but I have other plans."

"What plans?" asked Mrs. Frelinghuysen sharply.

"To amuse myself right here in little old New York."

Now, a conversation of this sort could have but one outcome; in about five minutes the aristocratic little lady was stiff with rage.

"This is outrageous!" she cried. "You can't go on in this manner."

"Why can't I?" said Carola.

"Your name will become a byword."

"I don't know what a byword is."

"No decent man would marry you."

"I'm not thinking of marrying," said Carola. "When I do—"

"You will fall a victim to a fortune hunter."

"Why not?" said Carola, with a provoking smile. "If he'd never had any money, what fun to fill his pockets!"

"Oh! Oh!" said Mrs. Frelinghuysen, making for the door with the smart bow on her hat faintly quivering.

Carola had one more shot in her locker. "What I was about to say when you interrupted me," she drawled, "was, that when I do marry, it shall be to an orphan."

"I shall never darken these doors again!" cried Mrs. Frelinghuysen, in the good old-fashioned way.

So much the better, thought Carola; but she did not say it. After all, she had the advantage of the withered little lady; about thirty years advantage, in fact. Her feeling of triumph faded as soon as the door closed. She was naturally a peaceable soul.

Oh, dear, she said to herself as she climbed the stairs, do I have to be fighting with somebody the whole time? I've a good mind to give away every damn cent and go work for my living like Miss Julia at Mandel's. However, Carola did not really mean this.

Happening to stray to one of the front windows of her boudoir, Carola's curiosity was excited by the peculiar actions of the people out in front. The sidewalk was thronged.

They could not stop and stare at the house—the police would not have allowed it—so they walked slowly up and down, staring at the windows, ten paces, then

back again. Carola was immediately discovered; she hastily stepped back out of sight. She called her maid.

"Good heavens, Ella, what is the matter with these people?"

Ella was delighted with the sight. "Curiosity seekers, miss," she said in an awestruck tone; "they read all about you in the papers, and they come to see the house."

"So this is fame!" said Carola.

It was now time to dress for dinner. Carola and Ella consulted about this matter. But Carola got no pleasure out of the dainty gowns that Ella spread before her, one after another.

"Too missish," she said, wrinkling up her nose. "I'm a woman now; I want to register. To-morrow I'll go to Mandel's and order a fresh lot, according to my own taste."

"Which will you wear to-night?" asked Ella.

"It doesn't matter. Give me the pale green with the beads. Hunt about and see if you can't find a big velvet rose or something to pin on the shoulder."

Carola was appalled by the prospect of the long dinner in solitude. Upon going downstairs she found McQuissick in the lower hall with his hat and overcoat on. "Stay and eat with me," she pleaded like a little girl.

McQuissick reddened with gratification, but stood firm.

"Sorry, miss," he said, "but I got to go home. If I don't show myself at home once a day, my old lady she'll divorce me!"

So Carola had to proceed to the dining room alone. The new staff, anxious to show their quality, had lighted up the room as if for a banquet; the big table was lovely under a bank of pink roses with forget-me-nots and maidenhair. But the single place that was laid looked piteously lonesome, and Carola felt about two feet high under that lofty ceiling. The elaborate ceremony dragged out its invariable course: *hors d'œuvres*, soup, fish, *et cetera*.

Having nothing else to occupy her mind, Carola studied her servants. The nameless butler was a fresh importation; he

was said to have come direct to her from the Duke of Portland. He looked it. His face was wrinkled up as if his sense of responsibility was strangling him. He stood at the sideboard waving his hands over the dishes like a priest at the altar.

The second man, on the other hand, looked like a purely American product, a tall, stalwart youth with beautiful blond hair. He acted as an intermediary between Carola and his mightiness the butler; changing the plates and fetching the food from the sideboard. Outwardly the correct and deferential servant, he had a look in his eye that suggested he knew himself to be a man as well as a servant. "Ella's friend," said Carola to herself, "from whom she got the cigarettes. Well, he's better looking than any of the young men I know."

While Carola ate he stood behind her chair. She was accustomed to it. The second man was cool, the butler nervous; in passing between pantry and sideboard, the latter slipped on a rug and recovered himself with difficulty. In connection with his awful dignity it was too ridiculous.

Carola caught the eye of the handsome young second man, and both were shaken with silent inward laughter. Laughter is a dangerous leveler. They felt like friends immediately. Well, why shouldn't I make friends with him? said Carola to herself. I said I was going to break all their silly old rules and regulations.

"What is your name?" she asked the second man.

"Stratton, miss."

"You are American, aren't you?"

"Yes, miss."

It was an unfortunate question. American suggested English, and English suggested the overpowering butler. The laughter which was still churning inside them suddenly broke all bounds. Carola and her servant laughed out loud together. The butler turned with a look of frozen horror, and of course that only made it worse.

When the second man went to the sideboard, the butler whispered to him, and the young man left the room not to return. Thereafter the butler served Carola with his own august hands.

After awhile she said: "Where is Stratton?"

"I was forced to ask him to retire, miss," said the butler.

"But it was my fault that he laughed."

"A good servant must know his place under all conditions, miss."

"But I can't have him punished for what was my fault."

The butler put down the dish he was carrying. He fairly trembled with rage or grief, or some emotion that was mysterious to Carola.

"Man and boy for thirty years I have served in the best houses," he began. "I hope I know what is due to my masters and mistresses. No complaint has ever been made against me on that score."

To be lectured by her own servant! This was intolerable. Carola jumped up and flung down her napkin. "Please spare me your orations," she said. "I have finished my dinner."

She went upstairs feeling very angry and dissatisfied with herself. It seemed as if everything she did was wrong. In a few minutes Mrs. Tylee, the depressed-looking housekeeper, came to her boudoir.

"I am sorry there was trouble at the table," she said.

"It was nothing," said Carola. "It was entirely my fault. I outraged the butler's sense of propriety. But surely I can do what I please in my own house!"

"Naturally," said Mrs. Tylee. "I will replace the man to-morrow."

"Give him a month's wages to heal his injured feelings. And try to get a more human one," added Carola. "Never mind if he hasn't worked for a duke."

"I'm afraid I must let the other man go, too," said Mrs. Tylee deprecatingly.

"But why? He hasn't done anything."

"I know; but after such an incident, if I kept him on, the new butler would never be able to control him. Servants are only human."

"Very well, if you must."

Mrs. Tylee went away. By this time Carola was utterly depressed. The prospect of spending a long evening alone was intolerable. She rang for Ella. Ella wasn't much, but she was better than nothing.

Ella appeared, red-eyed and sniffing. Evidently there had been a grand row below stairs.

Carola sent her away again. It seemed to her as if there was a curse upon her house.

Suddenly her eyes fell upon the telephone, and she thought of that nice, kind, wise old Mr. Breedon, who made everything so easy and comfortable for her. "Call me up at the Mackinac Hotel at any time," he had said. Taking down the receiver, she gave the number.

She was presently informed that Mr. Breedon was not in the hotel at the moment, but if she would give her name he might perhaps be found.

Five minutes later she heard the soothing voice over the wire:

"Hello, Carrie; what's the good word?"

"Oh, Mr. Breedon, I'm bored to tears," she said. "Could you come around and see me? I want to consult you about something."

"Sure!" he said instantly. "How about me and you takin' in a show together, Carrie?"

Her heart leaped. "Oh, can we?" she cried.

"Why not? What would you like to see?"

"Can we go to a revue? They would never take me to a revue. How about the *Escapades of 1927*?"

"Surest thing you know, Carrie. I'll get a box. I'll call around for you in twenty minutes. I won't come in," he added cannily. "When you see my car stop, come out."

"There's a crowd out in front," said Carola.

"Well, I'll send my chauffeur up the steps to fetch you down."

Carola, all smiles and anticipation now, put out the lights in her boudoir so she could not be seen, and sat down at one of the front windows to watch the crowd and wait for Mr. Breedon. Presently she saw McQuissick return, and an uncomfortable doubt attacked her.

What would he say to her going out? Of course, it was none of his business, but he might say something anyway. Oh,

bother! Everybody seemed to feel that they had to manage her. Could she get him out of the way somehow? No, such a trick would be beneath her. He had to learn sooner or later that she was her own mistress.

Carola had evening cloak, gloves, and bag handy to her hand, and as soon as the rakish landaulet drew into the curb she scampered down the stairs. Alas! McQuissick was mounting guard in the front hall, seated on a chair, reading a newspaper.

"Going out?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes," said Carola, with her sweetest smile.

"Shall I come?"

"No, thank you."

McQuissick scratched his head. However much trouble it might make, his sense of duty forced him to ask the question: "Where you going?"

Carola's dander rose, but she controlled it yet. "To the theater with a friend," she answered sweetly.

"H-m!" said McQuissick somewhat grimly. He was a father. "Who is it?" he asked.

Then the storm broke. Carola stamped her foot and proclaimed her independence anew. She refused to answer.

"Well, somebody's got to look after you," said McQuissick, with a worried look, "and there don't seem to be anybody on the job with me. Every crook and confidence man in town has got his eyes peeled for you after reading them stories in the newspapers. God knows I don't relish the job!"

"Then give it up!" cried Carola. "Understand, I will not be looked after! You will have to leave me. You have made it impossible for me to have you here."

"All right! All right!" said McQuissick sadly. "It was bound to come to this. I'm sorry. Just the age of my girl, too. But I guess it was impossible."

Carola waited for no more. She ran down the front steps with the tears springing to her eyes. An inner voice whispered to her that she had thrust away her best friend, but she would not listen to it. She flung herself into Mr. Breedon's car, still

seething with indignation. A fatherly patting of the big man's hand soothed her. Here at last was a nice person who understood her and did not force her to quarrel with him.

CHAPTER IX.

BROADWAY AFTER DARK.

ON his way to fetch Carola, John Breedon stopped at Elysia, in Forty-Ninth Street. This resort, the smartest in New York, did not advertise itself to the world by a sign over the door. The modest exterior in no way suggested the luxury within. Three plain, old-fashioned brownstone dwellings had been thrown together. They had been completely rebuilt inside, but the prim façades had been preserved unaltered, except that the entrance was now at the level of the former basements.

The entrance floor was devoted to dressing rooms in front, kitchen and service rooms behind, while the main restaurant was on the first floor with a gallery surrounding it. On the third floor there were charming rooms devoted to roulette, baccarat, and simple Canfield; but one had to be an initiate before gaining admittance here.

Breedon proceeded to the manager's little office on the entrance floor, and messengers were sent scurrying about for the men he desired to speak to. Elysia enjoyed a good patronage for dinner, and there was dancing throughout the evening; but of course the big show did not begin until after the theater. One by one the men sent for hastened to Breedon, not without a certain anxiety; Paul Chablon, the ostensible proprietor of the place, and four slim and good-looking young men, most beautifully finished.

Breedon took care to close the door before he started speaking. "Boys," he said, rolling the long cigar, "I'm bringing Carola Goadby here to-night, and I want you all to help me show her a good time. She's a personal friend of mine. Nice girl. I presume you read about her in the papers?"

They nodded, anxiously studying the fat,

masklike old face. When Breedon's words dripped butter and honey he was most dangerous. He never came out with anything crude and raw. You had to listen to his words and then make up your mind what lay behind them. And God help you if you got his meaning wrong.

One by one Breedon fixed the young men with his hard eye. "I want you to show her a good time," he repeated. "Flatter her, make her feel good; *but don't try to push yourselves forward personally.* You are her dancing partners, nothing more. If she smiles at you kindly, don't be misled by it.

"We got to take care of this little lady. Take your cue from me. I shall treat her like a father. You're all equal in this; if any one of you tries to make time on the others, it's out for him." He illustrated with an energetic gesture.

They nodded again.

"Are we supposed to know who she is?" asked Chablon.

"Sure!" said Breedon. "There's no secrecy about it."

"Her coming here will make talk."

"What of it? The more talk, the better for business."

Having dropped his hint, Breedon proceeded uptown to get Carola. In his car he listened sympathetically to the recital of her troubles, and patted her hand. She quickly felt better.

"You said you wanted to consult me," he reminded her.

"Yes," said Carola. "It's about Mr. Minturn. He's been calling me up all day. I suppose he wants to go on being my lawyer. I said I would see him to-morrow morning. What ought I to say to him?"

"H-m!" said Breedon thoughtfully. "It wouldn't be such a bad idea, Carrie. If we treated him rough, he might make a scandal."

"A scandal?"

"I mean, get us the wrong kind of publicity," he explained dryly. "You get your property firmly in your own hands, Carrie, and let the old boy go on playin' round."

"But how shall I do that?"

"Put it in a safety-deposit vault, and you take the key—the only key."

5 A

"All right," said Carola.

"And by the way, don't mention my name to Mitchell Minturn," added Breedon carelessly. "Me and him had a little trouble once. He don't like me."

In the theater Carola was enchanted. It had the allure of something which had been forbidden. To tell the truth, there were some things about the show she did not like, and other things, at which the audience laughed noisily, that she did not understand. But she mustn't be prudish, she told herself; it was all life. That was what she had asked for, and she could never get enough of it.

Breedon, who had seen the show a number of times, did not bother to look at the stage, but sat, half concealed by the curtains of the box, studying Carola with a fond and fatherly expression.

The odd thing was, that he really felt like that. Like other men, Breedon was a curious mixture. He was thinking: Dear lil thing—I will protect her from the wolves of New York! And at the same time the thought of her money was always present in his mind like the heat of a pleasant fire.

He would never have admitted to himself that he was planning to get her money, but all his acts were directed to that end. If things went well, her fortune, or a good part of it, would just naturally flow into his hands, and he would go on feeling fatherly and protective to the end.

When the final curtain fell Carola sighed like a child. "Oh, I'm so sorry it's over!"

"Well, it's over here," said Breedon; "but the night is young. What say if we go have a bite to eat somewhere, and see another show?"

"A night club!" said Carola. "I would love that better than anything."

"Ever hear of Elysia?" asked Breedon.

She shook her head. "I never could get anybody to tell me about those places."

"We'll go there. It belongs to a friend of mine, and for to-night it shall be yours."

Carola was rather disappointed by the outside of Elysia, it was so plain. Just an old-fashioned brownstone house without any lights in the windows; not even an electric sign. To be sure, one car after

another was discharging its freight of well-dressed passengers at the door, but they went in very quietly. Carola had imagined something more bacchanalian than this. Inside the door it was just like the reception hall of one of the best houses; ivory painted woodwork, red carpets, attentive and smiling servants. Carola found herself in a charmingly furnished dressing room with a maid taking off her wrap.

But the guests were not just like the guests in the houses that Carola had visited. At the little dressing table next to hers sat a girl who took Carola's breath away—a slender thing of flame and rainbows. "Not a day older than I am," thought Carola, "but she looks as if she knew everything."

She was wearing a dress of some shimmering material that changed color with every movement; her short, curly hair showed the lights of burnished copper. The pupils of her eyes were curiously distended, making the whole iris look black and mysterious; her cheeks and lips were scarlet—painted, of course, but how brilliant and effective!

The brilliant color robbed her face of humanity; she did not look like a common human girl, but like some mad young priestess of pleasure.

She struck powerfully on Carola's imagination. It was neither approval nor disapproval, but Carola felt herself drawn to her like the needle to the magnet.

The red-haired girl was talking in a high, clear voice to the girl on the other side of her—or to anybody who might hear:

"We got fed up with New York, and went down to New Orleans to spend the winter. We didn't have a cent beyond our fare, but we took a chance. Why should the men have all the fun of going on the bum? Two girls can always make out together. I got a job in a department store, demonstrating foot-ease, and my friend peddled margarine from door to door. Then we got acquainted with some nice men who gave us jobs in banks.

"We took a flat in the Pontalva Buildings, and furnished it on nothing at all. All

the most fascinating bums in the country drop anchor in that little park in the winter. The garrets of the quarter were full of them. I mean the wild young fellows, the rebels, the ones with too much oxygen in their composition, who break away from home.

"They're the nicest, and they never have a cent, worse luck. They paint, and write bad poetry, and make music, and do nothing at all. We laughed all the time, and lived on red beans and rice—"

Carola scarcely got the full sense of her rapid words; it was like a lurid glimpse into the unknown. The rapid rush of her speech was as intoxicating as her appearance.

Carola glanced with dissatisfaction at herself. Though her cheeks were delicately warmed with excitement, it seemed to her that she looked wishy-washy alongside the brilliant creature in the adjoining mirror. "I ought to have put on some rouge before coming into such a place," she thought. Then she perceived that there was rouge in little pots on the dressing table before her. She applied a little to her cheeks, but not with unqualified success; it would not spread properly.

Finally the girl next to her perceived what she was doing.

"Oh, my dear, that's not the way!" she cried. "You must lay a foundation first. Let me show you."

Carola gratefully turned sidewise in her chair, and the girl set to work with deft and knowing fingers.

"Ah, your skin is like lily petals!" she said. "It's plain to be seen you're a new-comer here. Who are you?"

Carola understood by tuition that one must not give oneself away in such a place. "Oh, I'm Titania," she said, smiling.

"You look it," said the girl. Her wild, strange laughing eyes were only a few inches from Carola's face as she worked. "I'm Cassandra; she was cuckoo, you know. Crazy Cassandra, that's me!"

"Don't put too much on to start with," said Carola.

"Don't worry, duckling," said Cassandra. "When I'm through with you, your boy friend will want to eat you."

Her boy friend! How that phrase softened Carola's heart. Would she find him in Elysia?

"Oh, that doesn't matter," she said, "I came with an old gentleman."

Cassandra laughed loud and long. "We all do, duckling. They have the price."

"Are there no young men here?" asked Carola, with a falling face.

"Oh, yes, they keep a few tame ones for you to play around with; but you have to be very prudent, duckling, or the payers will get sore."

Well, thank goodness, thought Carola, I can pay for myself.

When Carola mounted to the main floor with Breedon at her side, her longing for light and color and gayety was satisfied. Behind the prim fronts of the old houses a beautiful hall had been built which filled the entire plot of ground. It was surrounded on three sides by a narrow double gallery. On the galleries, and under the lower one, the tables were placed, leaving all the center of the floor clear for dancing.

"Only place in New York where you've got room enough to dance," remarked Breedon. "Costs money at the present valuation of real estate."

The place was decorated in a very modern fashion which combined severity of line with the utmost vividness of color. Ceiling, walls, and balcony parapets were painted in lozenges of glowing color like a harlequin suit.

The effect was indescribably gay and young. For the convenience of the dancers many little stairways came down from the galleries; but the tables were all served through openings in the wall behind, and the waiters were never in evidence on the floor. The orchestra was playing an intoxicating air, and a gay hum of talk and laughter filled the air.

At the top of the stairway they were received by the proprietor, a gentleman of the most perfect finish, also his majordomo, scarcely less imposing, and two lesser functionaries. Bowing low, these gentlemen murmured a welcome in such dulcet tones as to make Carola feel like royalty.

Then all four led them proudly across

the floor to a reserved table in the middle of the right-hand side—the best place in the room, as Carola could see. At this spectacular entrance all conversation ceased and Carola was sensible that every eye in the room was upon her. It took her breath away, rather; but how thrilling to be treated like a queen!

They were seated with genuflections. Carola's sparkling eyes took in the gay scene. There was a something about it—she could hardly put it into words, a sort of release, a letting-go, such as she had never experienced. Ah! this was life! She protested that she couldn't eat; nevertheless, various dainty morsels made their appearance, and she found them good; caviare on tiny squares of toast; lobster a la Newburgh in a ramequin; and an ice that was like nectar and ambrosia.

A cork popped discreetly in the neighborhood, and pale golden bubbles strained upward in Carola's glass. As she sipped, they began to course through her veins. She saw everything through a golden haze. Ah! this was Elysium indeed!

Meanwhile speculation was rife at the other tables. Marcus Breedon was known to most of the people present. "Who's the girl with him?" they asked each other. "Some class, eh? Looks like a top-notch. Not much more than a child. A new type for old Mark." By and by the answer began to fly about from table to table. "It's Carola Goadby. *Carola Goadby!* The twenty-million-dollar-baby! No! I have it straight. *Carola Goadby!*" And some who knew Breedon too well shook their heads and murmured: "What a pity!"

But Carola was happily unconscious of all this. While they ate there was a performance of the stage. It was all new to her, and she took it at face value. Old rounders in the vicinity who wondered wearily what they had come to the place for observed her fresh and delighted gaze with envious hearts.

Later the orchestra mounted to the stage, leaving the floor clear for dancing. It was a little company of artists under the leadership of one who was a master. Carola had never heard such jazz. Her toe began to tap on the floor.

"Like to dance?" suggested Breedon. "I haven't the finger for it myself, but I see plenty young fellows here who are crazy to be introduced."

"All right," said Carola.

She did not see Breedon make any signal. By magic as it seemed, an elegant young gentleman appeared before them, and was introduced as Sandro Belisario. When Carola extended her hand he kissed it with perfect grace and assurance. She was deeply thrilled. He was a romantic looking young man with languorous black eyes like a movie star, and two fetching little love locks that crept down his cheeks and ended in a point.

Carola thought him slightly ridiculous, but very fascinating. They started to dance. The young man was lost in a dreamy daze from which he issued very infrequently to speak. Speech, however, was scarcely necessary, for he danced like an angel. Through the shoulder upon which her fingers lightly rested, and through the hand which grasped hers, Carola could feel how his whole body yielded to the music. It was dangerously intoxicating. In order to keep her feet she felt obliged to say something.

"How beautifully you dance, Mr. Belisario."

"That is because I am dancing with you," his silky voice whispered in her ear.

Oh, dear, thought Carola, American boys will never learn to make such pretty speeches.

On the wrist which was extended, she caught the glint of a heavy circlet of gold. He saw her looking at it. "A gift from a friend," he murmured. "It is welded on my arm. I swore to wear it until I die."

Carola felt as if she were living in a novel.

When the dance drew to a close he began to quote poetry in her ear:

"Utter no softly whispered vow
There is no need
For any now.
Dance silently warm hand in hand
With beating hearts
That understand."

That was all. No explanation. How pregnant with warm and mysterious meaning. Carola was thrilled afresh.

"Well, how did you like the wop?" asked Breedon when she returned to the table.

"He's too good-looking to be left around loose," said Carola.

"His father is a laborer," said Breedon carelessly. "Paul picked him up shining shoes in City Hall Park."

"So much the more credit to him then," said Carola. "His manners are beautiful."

"Hm!" said Breedon.

When the music started again, Mr. Belisario hastened back to ask for another dance. At the same time arrived a blond young man who was introduced as Jack Winters. He had light brown hair that looked as if it had been marcelled. Carola, not wishing to favor Mr. Belisario too signally, accepted the blond.

He, too, danced beautifully. Unlike the other, he talked all the time; it was a gay rattle signifying little. He represented himself as being perfectly worthless, and appeared to expect to be liked for it. Carola did like him, but he was unable to efface the impression that the romantic Mr. Belisario had made.

Her next partner was Claude Tanner, a young man with slightly protuberant brown eyes which somebody must have told him were "compelling." He bored her through and through with them. He asked Carola if she didn't think he looked like Mussolini. She didn't. To her his eyes had no more expression than a pair of gumdrops, but she kept that to herself. He impressed upon her that he had been to Harvard, and was acquainted with all the prominent men in his class. This one bored Carola.

He was succeeded by a dainty little fellow called Freddy Earl, who had a soft, reedy voice, and a killing manner. He immediately took Carola into his confidence in a certain way that was new to her, whispering innocent little morsels of scandal concerning the people in the place, just like one girl to another. He was a new type to Carola.

But all four were desirable partners, and undoubtedly the best dancers in the room. It was highly agreeable to Carola's vanity to have them hasten to the table, and contend half seriously for the honor of dancing with her. Other women who had nobody

to dance with but their stupid-looking escorts glanced at her with spiteful envy.

As the evening wore on the fun became ever faster and more furious. Hundreds of brilliantly colored child's balloons were released, and were batted around the room in an impromptu game amid shouts of laughter when they burst. Watchman's rattles and other instruments of torture were distributed in great profusion, and the racket was deafening.

Carola, the child who had been suppressed all her life, enjoyed it without stint. It was perfect—well, almost perfect; her young men were too lukewarm; under the eyes of Breedon they dared not let themselves go completely, therefore Carola could not quiet let herself go either. She had not yet found the boy friend.

She envied the girl who called herself Cassandra, who was the bright particular star of the maddest party in the room. She finally mounted on the table, and sang to the accompaniment of the orchestra, while her friends joined hands and danced around her. An elderly gentleman adorned with a fool's cap executed a *pas seul* with a portentous air of gravity in the middle of the floor.

Carola learned fast. She was dancing with Jack—it was already Jack and Carola, for such seemed to be the custom; when she saw the romantic Sandro guiding a majestic dowager who danced with determination though her eyes were agonized and her face purple with her exertions. Poor fellow! thought Carola; I suppose that's how he earns his dinner. She passed so close that she brushed against Sandro, and she distinctly heard him murmur in the dowager's ear:

"Dance silently warm hand in hand
With beating hearts—"

At first she was angry; then she laughed at herself. How simple of me to be taken in so easily, she said to herself. The next time Sandro came to claim a dance of her, her smile upon him was dry.

Breedon took her away before the party got too much frazzled. Everybody in the room shouted good-by to her as she crossed the floor. How friendly! About ten gentlemen ridiculously decorated with

favours struggled to kiss her hand in imitation of Sandro, but none could do it like he. Carola tore herself away laughing. Her four swains accompanied her down to the door, each striving to recommend himself to her according to his own style.

"Have a good time, Carrie?" asked Breedon, patting her hand, in the car.

"Glorious!" sang Carola. "I've never had such a good time!"

"Good work! What you think of the boys?"

"I liked them, but there's something a little unreal about them, isn't there?"

"Exactly!" said Breedon approvingly. "Wise little head! That's the way to take life. Enjoy everybody's act, but never be taken in by it!"

Carola was proud of his approval.

"Let's go again to-morrow night," said Breedon, "and every night until you tire of it."

"I'll never tire of it!" cried Carola. "I've got a whole lifetime of dulness to make up for!"

CHAPTER X.

CAROLA IS CROWNED.

CAROLA was never lonely again. Friends seemed to spring up everywhere she turned. Such nice people, so anxious to humor her in every way and make things pleasant. She forgot what it was to be crossed; the whole world was full of smiles. Sometimes, just for fun, she would be deliberately willful to try them out.

It made no difference; they never ceased their efforts to please, to accommodate themselves to her. I suppose this is very bad for me, Carola would say to herself; but she had no desire to change it. Her house seemed to be full of people all the time. In fact, she sometimes forgot who they were or how they had come there; but they were all charming to her. Merry parties succeeded each other all day long, and half the night. Life was a continuous rush from one pleasure to another.

In her first interview with Mr. Mitchell Minturn, Carola learned that she had one

hundred and forty thousand dollars in the bank. All she had to do was to sign two little cards to be sent down to the bank, and thereafter she was free to sign checks for whatever sums she chose. What fun it was! She had never handled any money in her life before.

Mr. Minturn recommended that part of the money be invested, since on December first there would be as much or more coming in from interest and dividends, but Carola had a different idea. "It is everybody's duty to spend their income," she said. "It keeps the money in circulation and helps make good times." She had picked this up from Mr. Breedon.

"You can't spend your whole income!" said Mr. Minturn aghast. "It is more than a million a year!"

"I can but try," said Carola.

And in fact she scattered checks like falling petals in an orchard. That very same morning she sallied forth to buy an automobile that she could drive herself. She bought a huge Brewster green roadster that made her look like a pygmy at the wheel, and later she saw one of a different make in Copenhagen blue that she thought suited her coloring better, so she bought that also. The young salesmen were perfectly lovely to her. She gathered a whole bunch of them together and took them to lunch at the Madagascar. What fun they had!

In the afternoon she went to Mandel's to order evening dresses that would be suitable to appear in at Elysia; she rioted among splendid effects and showy colors; a gown of gold cloth and turquoise velvet; another of silver cloth misted with black net like the night sky; a scarlet dress such as she had longed for all her life.

This was to be made perfectly plain, to hang from her shoulders by two points. There was also a dress in paddy green; a sheath gown made of some weird iridescent Oriental stuff; and a taffeta dress with bouffant skirt in the brightest shade of blue. This was Carola's favorite color.

By this time she was tired of choosing. "I'll order some more next week," she said, and carried Miss Julia the mannikin off to have tea with her. Free at last of supervision and chaperonage the two girls had a

lovely time together talking about young men. Carola learned something from Julia. In a burst of impulsiveness she invited Julia to come live with her so they could always be together, but the offer was declined. Julia was wistful, but firm.

"My boy friend wouldn't like it," she said.

"But he can come to see you whenever he wants," said Carola.

"He wouldn't come. He'd just get sore. No," added the wise young head, "I had best stick to my job. It will give me a big pull at Mandel's when they see that you are my friend. And it will be just lovely if we can be together sometimes."

Carola privately resolved to send Julia all her girly-girly dresses that she was sick of, but which Julia seemed to like.

After tea she went to Mount's and ordered a diamond crescent that she intended to wear in her hair when she put on the black and silver dress. This made a really noticeable hole in her bank balance. I'll be able to spend it all before the first of December, she thought with satisfaction.

During those first days Carola had several interviews with Mr. Minturn. He had rather a deflated aspect when he came into her presence now. The gray curls hung limply down around the bald spot. He gave Carola to understand that his legal business had suffered irreparable damage owing to the announcement in the press that he was no longer her attorney; so Carola caused another notice to be put in the papers stating that Mr. Mitchell Minturn was still attorney and adviser to her and the Goadby estate.

So much for the public, but the erstwhile trustee soon found that his job was a sinecure now. Carola went on paying him a handsome stipend, but he had nothing to do except to offer advice, which, it is to be feared, was generally not taken. Carola, with all the attention, encouragement and adulation that was lavished upon her, matured almost overnight. The brilliant assured young creature, who ran her own show, had little left in common with the subdued child of yesterday, product of a long line of nurses, governesses, and chaperones. Mr. Minturn was forced to

transfer all her securities to a safety deposit vault to which she had sole access.

"But in order to safeguard your interests, securities frequently have to be sold, and the proceeds reinvested," he objected.

"That's all right," said Carola airily. "Whenever you want anything let me know and I'll get it out for you."

"And coupons have to be cut at regular intervals."

"Fine! We'll have a coupon cutting party. I'll take the gang down. It will be something new."

"But why must you take all this on yourself?" he asked with some bitterness. "Surely I could be trusted to look after it, and render an account."

"Sure," said Carola. "It's not that. But some time or other I might want a whole lot of money. Well, I want to be able to get it without having to ask for anybody's say-so."

"You wouldn't touch your capital!" he said aghast.

"Why not?" asked Carola.

"But—but that great fortune which you have inherited from your parents is a sacred trust—that you ought to hand on intact—"

"To whom?"

"Well I suppose you will have children some day."

"If I do I'll save them a nest egg. It's a bad thing for children to inherit too much," she added with a twinkle in her eye. "Look what it's doing to me!"

Mr. Minturn left her with sundry sad shakes of the heads. "Ducks and drakes!" he muttered to himself. "Ducks and drakes!"

Carola went to Elysia every night, and soon learned her way about the place. Her silky young attendants there, Messrs. Sandro, Jack, Claude, and Freddy accommodated themselves to her humor. Perceiving that Carola wanted everybody to let themselves go, they let themselves go—or appeared to do so. Carola had much more fun than upon her first visit.

However, she did not confine herself to these four. She brought her other friends with her; those strangely assorted friends that she picked up everywhere. My gang,

she termed them. They might include anybody from bookkeepers to bookmakers.

Marcus Breedon did not attempt to put any strings on her. He was quite content to be left out of her parties. In fact he declined to make one of a party; he was no hand in a crowd he said; he would rather wait until Carrie could spare him an hour or a half hour to himself. And Breedon remained her best friend—her only intimate friend; it was to him that she went for counsel. His store of humorous and worldly wisdom appeared to her to be inexhaustible.

A particular table was saved for Carola every night. Sometimes she would turn up after the theater with as many as a dozen people. Other tables would be hastily shoved up, and the fun would commence. The corks popped—notwithstanding the Volstead law—and the most delicious and expensive delicacies appeared in relays from the kitchen.

Carola had quickly established an *entente cordiale* with the leader of the orchestra, and that great man now took his orders from her. It would go on for hours and nobody was ever asked to pay for anything; no bill was presented to put a damper on the merriment. Of course Carola knew that a thumping big bill must be rolling up against her, but: "I should worry!" she said to herself; "with two hundred thousand coming in next month!"

What she liked best was to include a little salesgirl in her party who had never been further than Coney Island, or a good looking lad who had never had twenty dollars to blow in in his life, and watch the expression upon their faces.

Breedon would sit alone at his table, and take in all the fun with his fond and fatherly smile. Fond and fatherly! Of course, the way you regarded that smile depended on how you felt toward Breedon. There was a tall, distinguished looking woman who had clearly been a beauty in her day, but whose haggard, burned-out face was tragic now. She was heard to say to her partner as she danced by:

"See Breedon sitting there, grinning? Doesn't he look exactly like a bloated spider in the corner of his web watching the strug-

gles of us poor flies!" This was the famous Mrs. Piers Moberly.

The reporters came to see Carola every afternoon; that had become a regular part of her day. The twenty-million-dollar heiress and the snowstorm of checks she was scattering about her, made first rate news; they never failed to get a story out of it. Carola never told them anything, but let them make it up. Sometimes she had the likeliest among them to dinner and to Elysia later in the evening.

That made grand publicity both for Carola and the night club. Business increased to such an extent that M. Chablon doubled the cover charge with the aim of keeping out all but the heaviest spenders. It scarcely seemed to make any difference in the crowd.

Columns upon columns were written about Carola, all couched in the warm and adulatory phrases that, without her knowing it, had become the very breath of her nostrils. She bathed in admiration; it covered her like a warm blanket. Sometimes she would dream at night that it had suddenly been taken from her, and wake up shivering.

Everybody told her she was the best known woman in New York. As one slangy writer in the press put it: "All the previous spenders who ever hit this burg were pikers alongside of Carola Goadby." Carola loved that phrase. The sweetest moment of her day was when she sat up in bed in the morning, sipping chocolate, and reading the stories about herself which daily appeared in the papers.

And then one morning there was no story. Carola sent out for different papers, but it was the same with each. A particularly brutal murder had broken the day before, and in addition there had been a big holdup; Carola Goadby had been crowded out of the news. She affected to laugh at the circumstance; to make cynical little jokes about it; but it rankled; it rankled all day.

She felt a kind of disgrace like a deposed monarch, and would not take a party to Elysia that night. Instead she telephoned to Marcus Breedon to ask him to meet her there.

As soon as she joined him he saw that something was up, but he forebore to question her. It will come out, he said to himself in his wise way; and it did. It came tumbling out pell-mell as soon as he said:

"Well, hello, Carrie! This is great! I never get a word with you no more since you got to be so famous."

"Famous!" cried Carola. "There's nothing in that stuff!" (She was rapidly acquiring the racy speech of Breedon and the Elysians generally.) "These people set you up only for the sake of letting you down after. They play you off for the amusement of the boobs who read their sheets, and when they're through with you they throw you aside like a rag baby. Don't speak to me of being famous. I'm done with it. I've a good mind to go into a nunnery if I knew where one was."

Breedon smiled. It may be said that he smiled two smiles; an inner smile of satisfaction, and an outer smile of sympathy. "A nunnery, now," he said, "that would be a change after this, eh? That would land you on the front page again. You've got the right instinct for publicity, Carrie. But it would be a kind of farewell appearance, wouldn't it? Finito!"

"I never want to see a front page of a newspaper again!"

"It's the penalty of greatness, my dear. In order to keep in the forefront you always got to have a new stunt up your sleeve. It's up to you to pull something new, Carrie."

"What do you recommend," she asked bitterly, "a murder or a holdup?"

"Well, neither would be exactly in your line," he said with a chuckle. "The public resents it when their favorites try to change their rôles."

"What could I do then?"

"Well, you like this place, don't you? You got your publicity here. Your name is associated with it. Why don't you buy the joint outright, Carrie, and be the hostess here. That would make a story, I guess."

Carola's eyes widened at the dazzling possibilities of this idea took hold of her. "But—but," she stammered; "how could I run the place; buy the food and hire the waiters and all that?"

"Oh, you'd hire a manager for that. I'll undertake to find you a manager."

"Do you think M. Chablon would consider selling it?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Well, he's always talkin' about goin' back to La Belle, France," said Breedon.

"Call him over! Call him over!"

"Now, wait a minute, Carrie," said Breedon in his most fatherly tone. "I was only funning sort of, when I made that suggestion. Can you afford it?"

This only increased Carola's eagerness. "Afford it!" she cried. "Why, I can't even spend my income! Call him over!"

"Well, if you must," said Breedon with a shrug.

M. Chablon was summoned to their table.

"Paul," said Breedon, "I've heard you say you would sell this place if you got an offer. What would you take for it as it stands?"

"Well," said M. Chablon, "considering the lease, the good will, and the money I put into it, seven hundred and fifty thousand would be a fair price."

"Come off, come off," said Breedon with an appearance of scorn. "Get down to realities!" (This scene had been carefully rehearsed.)

"It's making over a hundred thousand a year clear," said Chablon passionately, "that's fifteen per cent on the investment."

"You're figuring on your present takings," said Breedon. "Miss Goadby brought that business to you, and she can take it away again. You can't figure on that as an asset. Come now, how much did you clear last year?"

"Sixty thousand," said Chablon sullenly.

"Then five hundred thousand would be a good price. This ain't like an ordinary business. You're on the top of the wave of popular favor just now, but it might roll back and leave you stranded."

"How wise Breedon was," thought Carola; "how well he managed for her."

"I won't take it," said Chablon.

However, the discussion did not end here, and after awhile Chablon reluctantly agreed to accept five hundred thousand dollars cash.

"Very well, then, I buy it," said Carola.

"Oh, is it you, Miss Goadby?" said Chablon with a surprised look. "Well, I congratulate you. I confess I hate to let it go. When would you like to take possession?"

"To-morrow night," said Carola promptly.

Chablon looked dubious.

"Of course it can be done," said Breedon. "Fix it up with your lawyers to-morrow morning, and the money shall be placed in your hands in the afternoon."

Carola gave him a grateful smile.

Chablon presently left them.

"How can I get all that money so quickly?" Carola asked anxiously.

"Give him securities," said Breedon carelessly. "That 'll do just as well. You can get 'em out of your vault in the afternoon."

"There's an awful mess of stuff there," said Carola, frowning, "and I don't know what's what, though it's all been explained to me."

"Do you know what bonds are?" asked Breedon. "Those are the engraved certificates with coupons attached."

"Oh, yes," said Carola, "the little pictures that you cut off and send to the bank. I remember a big pile of those all of the same kind. They are marked Utah Pacific Railway, and each one has a cunning picture of an old-fashioned locomotive at the top."

"Utah Pacific," said Breedon, "let me see?" He consulted a little notebook. "Yes, they sell above par. Five hundred of those will do. Take a suitcase with you to the bank. I'll go with you for safety's sake, and wait in the car outside."

And so it was done. From the bank they drove directly to Elysia—"To get the stuff off our hands," said Breedon—where Breedon carried them in to Chablon, returning presently with a receipt, and a sheaf of legal papers which, he said, constituted Carola the sole proprietor of the night club. They were all Greek to her. She thrust them negligently into her handbag without reading them.

It is hardly necessary to state that Chablon never saw the locomotive on the Utah Pacific bonds. Instead, Breedon peddled

them out in small lots through a score of brokers, and reinvested the proceeds in other securities. All Breedon's acts were carried out with the view of making a possible "investigation" as difficult as possible.

At midnight that night Carola and M. Chablon mounted the stage at Elysia together, and the latter in a neat little speech announced the change in ownership. The crowd cheered Carola to the echo. She likewise made a speech, the gist of which was that, in order to signalize the event, all refreshments would be on the house for that night. At that the crowd went simply wild.

Naturally, Carola reappeared on the front page with a bang next morning. Most of the papers ran the story with a two-column head or more, and the murderer was nowhere. Carola's whole career up to the moment was recapitulated. Scores of anecdotes, real and fictitious, were related to illustrate the character they were building up for her. It was upon this morning that some bright paragrapher first applied the epithet to her that they all took up later: Queen of Clubs! How happy she was!

Before she was out of bed, Breedon called up and, with a chuckle in his voice, said that he had taken the liberty to call up police headquarters on her behalf and ask for police protection for Elysia that night, in view of the mob that was to be expected. He recommended that only regular customers of the house be allowed in. Carola agreed.

Other people read the story with other feelings. There was Mr. Mitchell Minturn, who sadly shook his head a great many times, and murmured to himself as one who sees a gloomy prophecy fulfilled: Ducks and drakes! Ducks and drakes! Visiting Carola later, he did his best to learn if she had really bought the place, how much she had paid for it, and if she alienated any of her sacred capital. But Carola blandly evaded his questions and he departed none the wiser.

There were Miss Margaret Grasette and Miss Kate Grasette, cousins of Carola, who

held up their delicate, withered hands when they read the story. "Sister," said Miss Margaret to Miss Kate in horror, "this unhappy child is going down where the way is steepest. It is really up to us to do something to save her. We are her nearest of kin."

Down in Washington there was Senator Frank Peverley, the famous boy Senator from an Eastern State—though at that, the gray was beginning to appear in his hair—who was also a cousin of Carola's, and who had a design of marrying her and her twenty millions when he got around to it. In fact, that was the reason he had never married anybody else. He scowled when he read the newspaper story, and said to himself: This is too much! I shall have to run up to New York and see about it. Confound it! And I have the sole responsibility of the Peverley-Sugden bill on my shoulders!

Finally there was young Len Farley. He grinned in his cynical and good-humored fashion when he read the story. "H-m!" he thought, "that's the little angel I saw coming out of her house on Fifth Avenue that day. She must be anything but the lamb I took her for. That's one on me, all right. So she's the new boss at Elysia. I suppose that will let me out."

When he had an opportunity he asked Breedon about it. "Say, boss, this change up at Elysia; does that let me out?"

Breedon looked him up and down before replying. There was a great change for the better in Len's appearance since the day when Mack had picked him up in the East Side dive. To be sure, he had put on weight, but only enough to smooth out the gaunt hollows in his face. His well tailored clothes set off his superb figure to perfection; his sparkling eyes and the high, dark color in his cheeks revealed him to be in the pink of condition. "By gad!" thought Breedon. "Damned if I don't think he's the handsomest young blackguard in all New York." Aloud he said carelessly:

"First chance I get I'll take you up and let her give you the once over. If she likes your looks maybe she'll keep you on."

"Thanks, boss," said Len.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



When the S-12 Went Down

By H. L. GATES

"A N' what time will you be comin' for supper?" Bella asks when she's done with the good-by kiss she's takin' from Sandy, able bodied seaman, submarine crew of his majesty's S-12. She adds, explanatory: "It's Welsh rabbit I'm havin', and you know it won't wait."

Now I'm not sayin' but what Sandy counts Bella up and over all things, but I do say that if Welsh rabbit was a woman he'd be a bigamist. And Bella, smart little gig, trimmed slim, knows how to use her Welsh rabbits.

Sandy and me look at her surprised. She nods, wistful, sort of.

"Yes," she says, "I've been readin' in the papers how pettin' parties have come to London from America, and from what I've figured about 'em I want one. I'm givin' you Welsh rabbit, darlin', and if you love me you'll report prompt. After, maybe, you'll consider the wantin' I have."

Now Bella has rights, up to a point, to use her controls on Sandy, though why she took on with him, she bein' a rakish design, I don't know, but just the same I'm cox'un's mate, his superior officer, and he must look to me, accordin' to regulations, before he can go sayin' what time he's comin' home to supper and pettin' parties with his honeymoonin' wife.

So I says, "Bella," callin' her that because I'm his majesty's superior to her husband, "the orders is that we're to take the S-12 for a maneuverin' dive with the captain aboard to kind o' keep acquainted with his men. We'll be comin' ashore around five o'clock."

Sandy, whom I'm collectin' like the rest of the S-12's crew, who were scattered through the base, starts to say somethin', me havin' spoken first, as regulations provide, but Bella shuts him up with a wave of her hand off starboard.

"Five o'clock," she repeats.

Her brow contracts with her tabulatin'. From the corner of my eye I see Sandy straighten up, salute like, which he does when Bella starts tabulatin' on him with her brow contracted that way.

"You'll be stoppin'," she murmurs, "at the White Horse for a pint of beer. Sandy'll buy a pint, and you, Slim"—able bodied wives will call me Slim; what's to be done about it?—"and you, Slim, you'll buy a pint. That'll be two pints. You ought to be around here, the two of you, by six o'clock."

Me, bein' blowed with unexpectations, and silent thereaccount, Sandy says: "The two of us, girl? Do you mean you'll be countin' Slim in?"

I let the "Slim" go because I'm attentive to what Bella would be sayin' to that, she knowin' well my sentiments relatin' to Welsh rabbit. She looks me up and down, steady, then answers Sandy solemn: "I'm countin' him in on the rabbit for a reason I have, but not on the other thing I was speakin' of. You can lay to that, my darlin'."

"I'm layin' to that, every old time, little girl," Sandy remarks, which is useless for him to say, anybody knowin' what Bella's idea is of personal regulations. I stops him off and observes:

"I'm thankin' you kindly, Bella, and for the whiles I'm messin' with you I'll stow my dignity as his majesty's second cox'un and be commonlike, and matey."

"You'll hold your authority, Slim," she says, "and be cox'un's mate over this bow-legged darlin' o' mine till you get him home. That's why I'm countin' you in. I'll give you two pints at the White Horse on your way, and maybe a third in respect o' the ship, but you'll use your high position in the navy to keep my darlin' from lingerin' with a fourth for the service, a fifth for the first lord, a sixth for old England and one apiece for the colonies. You'll order his hatch closed on the third, you bein' superior, and you'll be here, the both of you, by six o'clock. Or there'll be a whopin' inquiry. I'll do no sittin' and watchin' a Welsh rabbit expirin'."

"Aye, aye, sir—blimey! Aye, aye,

Missus Bella!" I speaks snappy as a second cox'un should, and she gives me a nod, approvin', as if she was the lieutenant himself.

With these new responsibilities as pressin' as if they was regulations, I musters Sandy along with the rest of the swabs of the S-12 on board.

II.

WE'RE about three miles out, and I'm beginnin' to wonder if the captain will take us so far we can't get in to meet the rabbit by six, when he gives the word to the lieutenant:

"Take her down. Hold her at fifty feet. Follow shore line."

Now we got to look sharp, me hopin' everything goes pretty.

"Flood two and four auxiliaries," the lieutenant orders. "Close hatches!"

The first cox'un is at the fore control wheel. He gives the hydroplane control motors the buzz and sish comes the sea into two and four auxiliaries.

"Two and four auxiliaries flooded, sir."

"Hard-a-dive," says the lieutenant. The controls buzz again.

"Hard-a-dive it is, sir!"

I take station at the depth gauge, close by the control wheel. "Hold her at fifty feet, cox'un," the lieutenant cautions.

"At fifty feet. Aye, aye, sir," first cox'un repeats.

I gives him gauge readin': "Twenty feet, first cox'un," and he asks his motors for the hard-a-dive again.

All set now, for divin' and head-on. Sandy ambles up.

"Any orders, second cox'un?" he asks.

"Stand by," I tells him, then I says:

"Captain's goin' straight down. No foolin'. That means maybe we'll be gettin' in a bit early, like, if she runs smooth. I'm not sayin' but what if she behaves, we'll deserve the fourth pint, for the service—if we has the time, I'm meanin'."

"I'm not sayin' either, Slim, but what we should get up to the first lord. He's deservin' o' the honor."

"Deservin' he may be," I declares, "but he'll be dishonored this night. We'll stop at the service, Sandy, if we go that far."

There was argument in him, that I could see, which is the way with ablebodies if you unbend to 'em. I was of the mind to jerk him up sharp, when I sees the captain straighten up from leanin' against the periscope, which he's been watchin' the eyepiece of.

"Damn!" he says, and I mutters to Sandy straight off:

"Hold-to, matey! There's a sound I don't like in that 'damn.' Maybe its only the three Bella allows that we'll have time for."

"She's not going down," the captain complains to the lieutenant, who's standin' by.

The lieutenant asks me: "What does it read, second?"

"Twenty feet, sir," I reads him.

"What is it, cox'un?" he asks first.

"It's hard-a-dive, sir."

"Hell!" observes the captain, expressive. "She ought to be forty. Something's wrong, lieutenant."

Nothin' overjoyin' in havin' captain say somethin's wrong. Pretty much, he's the last to say it.

The lieutenant takes up the speakin' tube that cuts through the bulkhead to the engine-room. He whistles down for engine report. Sandy stands by to listen.

First cox'un and me watch Sandy, keen. He nods to us, enlightenin'. Bloomin' Diesel engines goin' steady as the queen's housemaids!

The captain comes over and studies the gauge awhile, and looks at the controls.

"Still hard-a-dive?" he asks first.

"Hard-a-dive, sir." The captain swears again, and remarks to the lieutenant: "She's got the devil in her, somewhere."

Sandy shakes his head at me, distressed. I know what he means. If the blinkin' boat has a mood on, and the captain gets good and mad, he's like as not to keep her chasin' her nose until she comes to her senses. I'm thinkin', with Sandy, of six o'clock, with or without the two pints or three.

The captain raps out: "Flood three auxiliary. Test ballast mains. If there's any air, flood 'em."

The first cox'un gives his control motors

a whirl. "Three auxiliary and all mains flooded, sir."

"Hard-a-dive, now, cox'un," the lieutenant says. "Down to fifty."

"Hard-a-dive it is, sir."

"Gauge," the captain calls to me.

"Forty-five, sir." Then my eyes glue down on that gauge dial until I'm believin' what I see.

"Holy mackerel!" I busts out to first.

No kind o' mackerel, holy or otherwise, is in regulations, but the captain cuts form and makes a leap to where I'm standin'.

"Holy mackerel it is!" he agrees.

The lieutenant moves up.

"Going down like a fish full of lead," the captain tells him. "Fifty-five. Sixty-five! Blow auxiliaries! Lively, cox'un."

The captain stands by to watch the gauge. The lieutenant crowds in and Sandy pushes up behind. No blasted boat has a right to dive the way she's startin' in so sudden.

"Blow two main ballast," the captain orders. His voice has a ring in it somethin' like a belayin' pin. Still she goes down.

"What is it, cox'un?" the lieutenant calls.

"Hard-a-rise, sir." But she don't rise! Goin' down.

I feel Sandy's face over my shoulder. Gawd! He's breathin' hot. The captain interrupts:

"Blow two main. Look sharp, first cox'un."

We hears the levers click, and the air hiss, and the water gurgle out to tickle the fishes under the fins. It's somethin' like your breath goes out when you're holdin' it till it hurts and lettin' go is welcome.

"Hard-a-rise, cox'un," says the captain, and the control motors whirl snappy like.

"Hard-a-rise it is, sir," the first calls, when his motors stop blowin' the water out.

"Fifty," the lieutenant mutters off the gauge, and turns away relieved.

"Forty-eight, sir," I calls after him without bein' asked.

The captain wheels and comes up to watch.

"Forty-two. Forty. Thirty-five!" he reads off.

"She's tilting, too, sir," the lieutenant warns him.

"Dials!" the captain shouts to signals—Tim Slattery—who's watchin' dials as well as radio. "Bow's climbing up, sir," signals reports.

"Check her. Lively there, cox'un!"

The lieutenant comes up from the dials, frowning, to tell the captain that the bow's still climbing. And well we know it, for we're slidin' backward now, slippin' all over the floor.

I don't mind sayin' I'm gettin' a creep in the small o' my back, and I'm seein' six o'clock, and Bella, and rabbit all crooked. Captain calls and I give him readin':

"Twenty feet, sir." And her bow tilted up like that!

"The damned hussy!" says the captain. "Hard-a-dive. Hold her down. Give two main half a drink. Lively, cox'un, now."

I can see captain's nervous. He pushes the lieutenant away from the engine-room tube and grabs it up. But he don't put it to his lips. He just listens against the bulkhead.

Diesel's goin' steady. Nothin' wrong there. He drops the tube.

"Hard-a-dive, sir," the first tells him.

But it ain't a dive. I look at the gauge. She's liftin' like a bird gettin' away from a gun. She'll be leapin' from the water in a minute, and the Lord only knows what that'll mean. Precedents is all different.

"Flood all!" The captain's voice has worry in it.

"Flood all, sir," first cox'un repeats.

Control motors is clatterin' like mad. I catches a look passin' between the lieutenant and the captain.

They don't speak. Their lips are set. But they look at each other. The captain heaves a shoulder, kind o' stiffenin', and moves aft.

I calls Sandy up. "Stand by the captain for orders."

Then I gathers up some ablebodies and herds 'em aft. Best be near the captain, now, when he wants somethin' done. He'll be in a hurry from now on.

The captain notices me stickin' around. It's first time I get a look straight in his face, matey like. Good sort, that captain.

"Flood all it is, sir," first cox'un's tellin' the lieutenant.

"All flooded, sir," the lieutenant reports. "Bow's checked, but she won't settle. It's hard-a-dive, but she's fighting up."

The captain turns on me: "Second cox'un."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Open two vent. Swing her around. Open three vent. Open Kingston two. Look sharp."

"Hold hard, you swabs," I shouts. "Fast now. Open two vent. Swing her around, Sandy. Open Kingston two."

When I reports the orders carried out the captain speaks to me straight. "By Heavens, second cox'un, she's clear crazy. If she sticks her nose out this way she'll entertain us by turning over."

"Aye, aye, sir," I says. "Don't you think, sir, we'll be gettin' in by five o'clock? Leastwise, six, sir?"

He don't answer, which he shouldn't, me havin' spoken out o' regulations, but he's regular, that captain. He lets it go.

Wishin' I hadn't spoken like I did, I'm turnin' away to give somebody a bawlin' out for somethin' when I see the captain's face go hard, sudden. Across by the gauge the lieutenant goes stiff, too, his eyes up to the conning tower.

"Steady, men," I hisses to the able bodies movin' about. "Hold-all!"

I jumps a bit when the lieutenant makes a rush for radio, but the captain's listenin', and I stands by.

Then I hears it, too! Whir, buzz, buzz, buzz! Louder. It's comin' closer.

"Oh, Sandy!" I thinks to myself. "Poor little Bella."

Signals has been listenin' so hard he don't know the lieutenant is right by his shoulder. He shouts, clear:

"Propeller overhead, sir. Ship above riding us down."

Distinct, I hear the captain's whisper to himself: "And we can't handle her. Dear God!"

His orders kind o' bite the air. "Hard-a-port! Full-on. Everything we've got. Flood everything. Open all. Drown her, cox'uns, drown her!"

I leaps to the steering wheel, not trustin'

the able-bodied I has there. Sandy beats me to it.

"Hard-a-port it is, sir," he calls about as quick as Jack Robinson.

"Everything flooded. All open, sir," first cox'un sings out. Blimey! If I don't think first cox'un's clear off his nut, he sounds that merry.

"Clear for'ard," captain orders. The lieutenant makes it for'ard. "All clear for'ard," he calls back.

"Close watertight doors."

"You, Sandy!" I yells, and he turns the wheel over to the able-bodied, who can keep it there now that Sandy has it full hard-a-port. The whirrin' and buzzin' overhead is closer.

But louder is the sound of the water rushin' into everything made to hold it. There's a ringin' clang of a metal door, and Sandy's voice, faint: "For'ard watertight door closed, sir."

The lieutenant gives it to the captain. Clang, goes my door, which ain't actin' right, but has to close, the way my mind's made to it.

"After water-tight door closed, sir," and the lieutenant takes me up: "Water-tight doors closed, sir."

The captain takes the engine room tube. I'm thinkin' he'll bust it with the roar in his voice. "Push the motors, damn 'em! Push 'em."

The lieutenant's slippin' and slidin' toward the cox'un's controls. "Sink her. Hard-a-dive—"

Then she hits. For'ard. Daintylike, at first, as if somethin' was just flirtin' with the S-12, kissin' her tender, like maybe it was Bella kissin' Sandy in between times. Then grindin', rippin', tearin' furious. Crunch!

Down I goes on my face and spits out some teeth. Blimey! I was chokin' on 'em.

There's a crackle and a flash like all the lightning from here to Kingdom Come bustin' loose at once. Before I goes blind I has the idea Sandy's boundin' back like a bloomin' rubber ball from hittin' the wheel.

Then, Sandy bein' shut out account o' me bein' blind, and not knowin' whether

he hit fair or foul, I see him and me and Bella eatin' that rabbit. Then the smoke gets me.

It's the first himself who pulls me onto my feet and shakes a bit o' knowin' into me.

"Aye, aye, first cox'un," I says.

We turn to gettin' the captain onto his feet, but we go down again together.

There's another crash. This time it's aft. Not so hard, but there's a rip and a tear in it. It's dark, save for the lieutenant's hand torch. We hears him reportin', not knowin' that the captain's under us.

"Hit fore and aft, sir. All hands! Torches."

The captain's dazed, and sways a bit. He feels his head, tentative. He gives it a hard shake, stubbornlike, and takes command again, weak, sort of.

"Cox'uns!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Everybody amidships. Count your men. Why is it so damned dark?"

"Switchboard's gone, sir," says the lieutenant. "Blown out, clean."

First cox'un and me haven't noticed it before, but realize all at once how quiet it is. Not a buzz left in the Diesels.

Captain's himself now. "Gauge!"

I grabs a hand torch from an able-bodied and gives a look to the readin'. "Goin' down hard, sir."

"Blow all, lieutenant!"

The lieutenant swings his torch and makes out that we're standin' by, ready to jump.

"Quick, cox'uns. Close vents. Full air in everything. Close all Kingstons. Screw them tight."

While I'm jammin' Kingstons home, I orders Sandy to get all torches and flashes he can find. He stops to give me some gab, forgettin' ship's discipline. What he says in my ear, is:

"If either one of us—Bella?"

And I gives it back to him, straight: "If either one of us—Bella." The lubber's gone crackpot for botherin' to ask.

"Main ballast's all empty, sir. Auxiliaries empty, sir. Kingstons closed," I reports to the lieutenant.

"Good, second. Quick work. That's the lads. What do you make it?"

"Fore compartment's full of water, sir. Ripped. Bulkheads holding. No water aft I can make out, sir."

Sandy picks us out with his torch and comes up. "Forty-five on the gauge, sir; signals says to report she's settling, five degrees by the bow, sir."

The captain hears. "Tell first to pump out the fuel tanks. Stand by for the hand pumps."

"Aye, aye, sir!" But it's a proper bit o' hint in orders like that. 'Slike sayin' here we are, but how'll we be gettin' some place else?

I gives the orders to the first, and I gives him the able bodies to take the pumps.

"Report carrying out," he tells me. Then he holds me. "Second cox'un," he says.

"Aye, aye, first cox'un."

"Stow the aye, aye," he mumbles. "I'm askin' you, man to man, I ain't been such a hell of a superior, have I? Not too up-ish, toffish, I mean? You'll answer me fair."

"First cox'un," says I, "I'll give it to you fair. You've been a damn clean first, and what's separate and additional, you've been a chum. Blow me if you ain't!"

"Fair?"

"Fair."

"Stand by the captain, second cox'un."

"Aye, aye, first cox'un."

I looks at the gauge as I'm goin' by. When I throw my torch on the captain, he's thoughtful-like, and silent. The lieutenant's watchin' him. I begs to report gauge readin'.

"Needle's hoverin', sir. Seems to be holdin'. Up a foot and down a foot, sir."

"Thank you, second. We can do with a bit of steadiness."

The torch beams, tremblin' here and there, make it kind o' sneaky, and the cussin' a body gives the Diesels when they's buzzin' you out o' hearin' ain't nothin' to what you wants to baptize 'em with when they're so contrary quiet.

I'm arguin' with myself that maybe, anyhow, the S-12 is as like to take a notion to

go up as down, between now and six, when I hears the lieutenant say to the captain, low, sort of, the Diesels bein' still that way:

"What's chances, sir?"

So I listen, not denyin' that there's a bit o' curiosity in my disposition. The captain waits a minute, then he answers, low like, too:

"Not much, if we're to depend on ourselves, old fellow. She's so heavy for'ard she wouldn't move even if we had the motors. We're lucky to have controls working, but we can't raise her. She'll settle. Splendid crew we have, lieutenant."

"King's lads, all of them, sir."

Fine chap, that lieutenant. King's lad himself, thinks I. 'Sfunny how a lubber can change his mind about his uppers.

I keep stealin' a look at the captain. Presently he shakes his head as if there's somethin' in it he doesn't like. He wheels, sharp, and gets sight o' me.

"Tell first to shut down fuel pumps. Bring him back with you."

"Fuel pumps closed down, sir," the first reports, when I bring him up.

The captain doesn't reply, but speaks to the lieutenant:

"Muster the men, lieutenant."

I move about, opposite the first, and help gather 'em up. I calls the stokers through the engine-room tube. We make a tightish jam, torches flickerin', some shinin' up, some down. Kind o' know what's goin' on in a blighter's mind when he's behind a torch from the way his beam splashes, steady or shaky.

"All present, sir," first cox'un reports.

"Ship's company present, sir," the lieutenant gives the captain.

He stands stiff, throwin' his light on his own face. The torch flashes come down from over and up from under, and we puts our lights on our faces so the captain can see ship's company.

He brings his hand up to salute, and he holds it there, longer than ordinary. I'm thinkin' maybe he's puttin' somethin' into the salute, while he looks us over, quiet like, that we don't know about or maybe ain't our business. Pretty soon he clears his throat.

"Men," he says, steady, "we'll be
5 A

thankful that she's hangin' where she is and not restin' on the bottom by this time."

It's "Aye, aye, sir," in our minds, whether we says it or not.

"Very good, so far, men. But it won't do. Can't last. Too much water in her for'ard. We can hold out like this for perhaps twelve hours, possibly eighteen. By then, I don't know. Meanwhile I'll have to shut off smoking."

He pauses, his eyes still scrutinizin' us, queer like. Sandy mutters to me out the corner o' his mouth: "Fancy us, Slim, promisin' to be home by six sharp. Won't Bella hold an inquiry, though, what with the rabbit both expired and mortified?"

I'd 'a' clipped him one wasn't it for those steady eyes o' the captain's. Or maybe I wouldn't of, I don't know. Captain's talkin':

"We've a right to hope that the ship that struck us will report hitting an obstruction. The oil I pumped out will make patches on the surface. We can hope it will attract attention from passing vessels. There's a chance. But we mustn't depend upon our hopes. We must take action."

When he stops we know he's puttin' somethin' up to us.

"Aye, aye, sir," says the men, chorus like. Some of 'em adds: "Good old captain!"

"Thank you, men. There are some decorations that even the king can't bestow. Now, I'll ask you, my lads, to come to attention and listen sharp."

"Ship's company, attention!" orders the lieutenant and we snaps into it. The captain stands straight, now, and speaks brisk.

"For the plan I have I require but one man. I shall not ask for volunteers. I know there isn't a man of you who'd stand back. So I shall leave the matter in the hands of the one who is closer to you, perhaps, than any of the rest of us. He's one of your own, besides. Second cox'un, stand by."

What the— Blimey! If it isn't me the captain's callin' up. Me, Slim, called up like that account o' the captain's plan for the savin' o' the blasted blighters from the fix we're in.

"Aye, aye, sir," I tries to say while I'm steppin' up, but I'm that blowed I gurgles. Captain never turns a hair.

"Second cox'un," says he, "I've thought of blowing a man out of the conning tower, but have decided it's too dangerous. Afraid he'd foul on the bridge fittings. I've chosen the torpedo tubes instead. The pressure at this depth is about twenty pounds. There's a good chance of a man's living and coming out at the surface conscious, despite the speed with which he'll go up.

"If he doesn't, he'll know when he starts that he's making the only try for his fellows and we'll know that he tried for us. I'll not say any more, for we'll need all the energy we can save. I leave it to you. You will pick the man. Take over, second cox'un!"

Take over, indeed! A feather would have knocked me flat, I'm that uncertain on my feet.

It's the lieutenant who brings me to when he comes over and says to me, coaxy like: "I'll take an order from you, second cox'un, if you'll give it to me."

"Sorry," I gives him, standin' to the rights the captain hands me; "men wouldn't like it, sir."

Signals passes me on his way back to his Morse key, which is pretty near dead on him. He pokes me.

"Sharp old captain, we have," he says. "Picked you because you'll slip into the tube easy. So little of you atween fore and aft."

That's account o' me bein' slender, he says that, and I slugs him one. Sure, the captain knew I'd be pickin' nobody else but myself. First time I get proper consolation out o' bein' called Slim.

The able bodies come crowdin' around, every last jack of 'em, with argument as why they'd be better on the get-there than me. Some of 'em take offense that I'd choose myself just because the captain gives me leave.

I sees none o' their arguments, none at all, and I puts 'em in their places, neat, remindin' 'em I'm second cox'un and they'll speak accordin' to regulations, which is when they're spoken to.

I stops over for a chin with torpedoes, Watts by name.

"You'll be steady with that tube, Watts," I cautions him. "Or I'll forget what I'm sent for, 'cause o' a feelin' o' spite. So don't go slippin' me any more air than the lieutenant orders. You hear? I'm no regular projectile, you know."

"Blast me, second, you leave it to me. I'll give you no more than I thinks 'll get you up. You won't expect me, sort o' dependin' on if I make a good shot, givin' you less, would you?"

I looks at him suspicious, but I sees he's bullyraggin'. I turns to find the lieutenant and tell him I'm ready.

It's then I faces Sandy, and I know, account o' the look in his face, I've got to be stiff.

"Hold hard, able bodied," I warns him. "Remember I'm second cox'un."

"Second cox'un you are," he says, "and if you say it again I'll slug you, Slim, s'help me. Where's the brig they can put me in, I ask you, what with bein' in Davy Jones's locker now, or almost? Now look here, we've been chums, and I've always admitted you was the better man nor me, apart from bein' second, except that there's Bella. You've granted that there bein' her, why I'm better 'n you except at inspection. Be a good chum, Slim, and own up it's the truth you owe it to me, this tube business. Account o' Bella, Slim."

Of course any other time I'd o' weakened right there, but this ain't any other time. It's a suffocatin' *this* time.

"We've been chums," I returns, "like you say. And I'm hopin' we stay chums. But I'm picked to go shootin' out o' that tube, and you're picked to stay behind and pray like hell there's breath in me when I get to the top."

"But think o' Bella," he pleads. "She's waitin', or will be. Are you mindin' that?"

"I've been thinkin' o' that. But what are you gaffin' for? If I get through I'll be gettin' you up, all o' you. If I don't, I won't. It'd be the same with you. One o' us couldn't do better for Bella."

"That's where you ain't square, Slim," he says. "Or you ain't thinkin'. We

promised to be home by six, you remember? I put it to you—if you go up the tube you've got to wait till the wreck raisers get over us before I comes up. If I go up, I can strike out for Bella as soon as I get word to the dockyard. I'll get a lift on shore somehow, and won't keep her waitin' so long."

Now, he has me there, and I won't say but as I'd thought the same thing and was keepin' my counsel. But I looks at him scornful, for I has him on another account.

"Think o' your legs, man. Could you get those knees close enough to slide 'em into the tube?"

I take his arm, then, thinkin' to bring him along to the lieutenant, chums like, while I report ready. But he pulls away from me.

"I've thought o' them, Slim, and you remember both the lieutenant and Bella, him account o' the king, and her maybe for pettin' reasons like you say, dis'proves 'em. If you push hard enough when you load me, you'll get 'em in. If they jam you can give her more air. Maybe if the tube bends in a bit they'll stay. That'd please Bella, Slim, not to say the lieutenant. It'd help make up for spoilin' the supper."

Well, there's nothin' to be done with a lubber like that.

"Carry on, Sandy," I says.

If the lieutenant is surprised I pass the job to an able-bodied, he doesn't show it. He gives Sandy a salute. The captain speaks sharp:

"Able-bodied seaman."

Sandy clicks his heels, me a cursin' him down in my throat for puttin' it over on me.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"What's your name?"

"Bolton, sir."

"Quite game, and all that, Bolton?"

"Just a speedy way o' gettin' home, sir. Tired o' the bloomin' sea for the day, sir. Beggin' your pardon."

"Home? Family, Bolton?"

"Bella—that is, missus, sir."

"If you get home you'll give her my compliments, Bolton."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Your hand, Bolton."

And bless me! if they didn't shake hands,

matey, captain and that blasted swab. Rippin' beggar, captain.

"Ready, Bolton?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Carry on!"

I thinks to take Sandy's hand when the captain turns away, but he gives me a "Garn!" and has a shake all round with the men. They give him advice, too, one of 'em sayin' to look lively for Bella accusin' him o' stoppin' on the way for a yap with a mermaid.

Other ones dubious about him swimmin' at all, if he does get to top, account o' one o' his legs bein' bound to shove starboard while t'other will be pushin' port. It's the lieutenant that stops the business.

"Cut the skylarking with him, men. He'll need all the wind he's got. Draw him a double ration of rum, first cox'un."

Sandy holds his cup to the captain. "Like to say here's luck, sir."

"Thanks, Bolton. Luck yourself. When you get to surface strike hard-all for the shore. We're about two miles off. Hunt nearest telephone or telegraph and notify base. I'll write down our position for you. Get the wreck raisers here on the double. I'll send up more oil patches. If shore radio can pick up any vessels near, have 'em stand by for emergency. Tell them our sound signals are growing weaker fast, and can't be heard far. Remember my compliments to the missus. Bet she's a fine girl."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Go ahead, lieutenant. Starboard beam tube."

"Stand by starboard beam tube, Bolton," the lieutenant orders. "When you're loaded shipshape, I'll give two knocks for warning, then one knock for lettin' in water. I'll give you the air on the five second count after that. Is this all clear?"

"Two knocks," says Sandy, "and I start prayin'. One knock for amen. Count five and I'm gone for a bit of a swim. All clear, sir."

With the men crowdin' behind, the lieutenant and Sandy go up to the starboard tube. I'm wonderin' if that beggar has nothin' to say to me, when he gets hold o'

my hand, s'reptitious like, and he says, sort o' mumblin': "Chum."

"Chum," I says.

Then we starts shovin' him in, head first. I'd a sworn we'd never do it, account o' his knees, but on the third heave there he is, we lookin' at the soles o' his feet.

The lieutenant asks him: "All right in there?"

His voice comes out, muffled: "All right, sir."

"Close tube!"

There's a bang, with the tube bein' closed, and it's loud, and it's the cheerio bang for Sandy, one way or t'other. Made a fellow think about Bella kind o' different from any time yet.

"Stand by," the lieutenant warns torpedoes.

"Aye, aye, sir," Watts replies from aft.

"Twenty pounds pressure, Watts. Be careful. No more."

"Twenty pounds. Aye, aye, sir."

The lieutenant lifts his torch and throws his light beam up. We're quiet. Could o' heard most anything drop.

With somethin' metal he'd picked up, the lieutenant gives two knocks on the tube.

"Stand by the sluice door," he calls, and I jumps to the sluice door wheel, my station at firin'.

"When I give one knock," says the lieutenant, "run it back hard-all. Put your soul behind it, second."

"Back hard-all, full soul, on the knock. Aye, aye, sir."

There's a warnin' swing from the lieutenant's torch. One knock.

I gives the sluice door wheel hard-all, full soul. The water gurgles as the door swings hard. I hear the lieutenant countin' out loud:

"—two—three—four—"

"Sluice door's full open, sir," I tells him.

"—five—Fire!"

There's a click and, damme! if I don't dodge it as if it was somethin' hittin' me instead o' just torpedoes lettin' go. There's a hiss, and a sort o' bumpin' sound, empty like.

"Fire it is, sir," calls Watts from aft.

"He's gone, men," the lieutenant says, soundin' farther off than Watts does aft.

He stands still the beam of his hand torch dropped to the floor, makin' a wabby kind o' ring. Pretty soon he looks around to us. We've been watchin' silent.

"He's up by now, and righto I hope. Drain tube. Close sluice door."

"Very good, lieutenant," the captain remarks. "Serve a double rum all around, cox'un."

Most times there's a lot o' lip between the men when the captain stands treat around, raggin' about the girls that come to base and a thing or two like that. But just now we does our drinkin' quiet.

Captain's thinkin' too, and figures on a signal pad. We're o' the same mind, countin' up to about when we ought to hear from Sandy, or know he stopped on the way.

It's four o'clock. He's got two miles to go if his legs don't go shovin' him in a circle. Give him an hour ashore and he'll have word to the base. If base gets a move on, not wastin' time lookin' for ablebodies elsewise than at White Horse, they'll be over us by eight.

If Slattery's sound signals ain't clear dead by that time he'll pick up anything from right over. Or they'll send down a diver to give us a neighborly tap in the ribs.

"About seven o'clock, or eight maybe, don't you figure it, first cox'un?" I suggests.

"Thereabouts, second, if and as," he agrees. "What's your hurry? Ain't you seen enough o' daylight yet?"

"Don't want 'em comin' 'round on the night watch," I corrects him. "I hates to be disturbed."

The first keeps his eye peeled on the gauge. Nothin' else much to do, outside o' waitin'.

She's settlin' slow, foot now and then, but she keeps at it, irritatin'. Why I go for'ard, I don't know. Might as well o' been aft. But for'ard it is, and I comes up sharp.

More trouble, and this time it's hard-all! I throw my light to the captain and he gives me his salute, but he sees my face.

"Quick, man, speak low. What is it?"

"Chlorine, sir. Leak in the battery compartment for'ard."

He takes a step.

"Careful, sir," I begs him, but he gets a sniff and throws up his arm.

"Leaking everywhere," he mutters. "It'll strain through the ship. Lively, second. Tell the lieutenant to get everybody aft—after compartment. No batteries there."

I lose mighty little time givin' the lieutenant the captain's orders. And ablebodied, one o' the kids, hears me and lets out a yelp. "Gawd help us! We'll be gassed in a jiffy."

He starts to blubber and I biffs him, but the lieutenant throws his arm over the kid's shoulder while he calls out: "Chlorine for'ard, men. All aft. Go into after compartment. On the double, lads."

The kid starts yelpin' again, about somebody left alone account o' his goin' away for keeps, and I starts for him hard, panics bein' out o' regulations whether the hereafter's comin' up head-on or not. The lieutenant saves him again, shuttin' him up with soft stuff.

"Steady, my boy. Ship's company going along with you, wherever. Service o' the king, you know."

Sort o' braces the kid. He splutters: "Aye, aye, sir. Service o' the king."

Everybody's aft, around first cox'un, who's pushin' on the after compartment door, same as I had trouble with when I banged it after we was struck with the bloater up above.

I look around for the captain because o' that sniff o' gas he got, and I see he's stopped at radio, where signals is sittin' at his key.

I stand by. Signals is sayin': "Key's tremblin', sir. Somebody near trying to get us, I think. Maybe I can pick it up. Stick to station, sir."

"Get aft with the men," the captain orders him, abrupt. "I'll have a look at the key."

He turns on me, but I say, firm: "Stand by you, sir. Second cox'un's post."

"Damn key trying to give us something," he murmurs.

"Maybe Sandy's reached 'em ashore," I ventures.

He watches shiverin' key, but I see he's staggerin' on his feet, and I catch him.

"Just a touch, second," he says. "Thank you. I'll be all right."

Will he? I wants to know of myself. Chlorine's tricky.

I ease him along aft to where the men are bunched. They're shovin' around, and mumblin'. The kid's whimperin' again and somebody's callin' for a special ration o' mercy.

"After water-tight door's jammed, sir," the lieutenant reports. The fear in his tone jerks the captain stiff.

"Steady, men! We're not going out like rats in a trap if we can help it. Hammers. All you can grab. Everybody at the door, hard-all."

First cox'un brings up the hammers, and we grab for 'em.

"Heavy-on," the lieutenant urges us, and we heavy-on. The clips give.

"Swinging in, sir," the first cox'un give us news.

The captain reminds us: "In you go, one by one. Lively-all."

He's swayin' again, and I'm just in time to get him under the arms. I pretty well have him into the after compartment when he stops me, callin' up the lieutenant.

"Have engine chief disconnect for flooding. I'll want the air, too. This door is sprung. We can't trust it. I'm going to—"

He doesn't finish, because he's gasping. I get him in now, and the lieutenant orders the door closed and clips knocked home. When the captain gets his breath he asks the lieutenant to count up.

When he finds ship's company all present he's easy.

"Good! Glad it got none of them, but we can't wait too long. All's clear in here now, but it may strain through at any minute. I don't like that door."

At that we all has a speculatin' look at each other, and most o' the faces we see in the torchlights ain't so pretty, what with the twitchin' around their mouths and the kind o' givin' up in their eyes.

Chlorine's got a low down way about it. 'Sidious, they calls it, which means when you know you got it, why, it's just that much too late.

But we're still, even the kid and the able-bodied who was puttin' in his bid ahead

o' time for mercy. We thinks the captain won't leave it go at that, and he don't.

"Must get out of here, men," he says, pretty strong, fightin' hard to conquer the touch he has. "There's but one way. Engine room hatch. If ship's company agrees, I'll flood the engine room up to our shoulders, equalize pressure with the air, and open the hatch. There'll be a bubble go up to surface, and if we look sharp we'll all be in it. We'll be stunned, perhaps, but it's a fighting chance. Gas won't give us any."

He stops to let it sink in, I suppose. Some able-bodied says: "If we only knew about Sandy."

"I think he got through," the captain says. "Somebody is trying to reach us with Morse. The key won't take it, but I'm certain I made out, 'Able-bodied Seaman.' I have hopes there's a boat near."

"That settles it," somebody pipes. "Good old Sandy!" Another says: "Bet 'e got a whale stuck atween his legs and got took ashore." The first cox'un speaks up: "Give commands, sir."

"Right-o! It 'll be over in a minute. On life-saving jackets. Get the men under the hatch, cox'un, and hold 'em still. Keep them reminded we're just going up to meet Bolton."

The whimperin' kid's hand is tremblin', and the captain sees him makin' a hard shift with his jacket.

"Here, my lad," he calls, and he helps the kid fix himself. "Steady now, boy. Think of the story you'll have to tell your mother. Must tell her to come see me some time at Base. Left arm here, m'lady. Cross. Now the other. Tighter. That's the ticket. Service proud of chaps like you. Don't worry, I'll be coming along right behind you."

"Your jacket, sir," I says, holdin' it to him.

"Thank you, second. Keep your eye on that youngster. Don't let him go off the deep end while the water's coming in. Must keep steady-all."

I don't like somethin' in the way the captain's actin'.

"May I ask special favor, sir?" I says, when I've got his jacket all secure.

"Why, yes, second."

"Permission to stand by you, sir, until you go up."

I notices he takes his eyes out o' mine, and I says to myself: "Ho, ho, old captain!"

"You may stand by awhile, second." He's evasive, and I catches it. "You must take station when I reach for the air valves." Which I won't, I decides, secret.

"Ready for flooding. Air ready, sir," the lieutenant gives him.

"Stand by the hatch with the men, lieutenant," he orders. "Be ready to pull the vent lever for opening when I throw up my arm. Be sure the men are all under. Must make most of the first upward impulse."

"How about you, sir?"

"I'm steady now. I'll be coming along when I've got the air right." His voice drops a bit. "Too bad to leave the ship, lieutenant." If that able-bodied seaman really got through, we might have saved the old girl as well as the men. Chlorine puts us out of luck." His voice goes firm. "Stand by to open. Give the men my compliments and good luck to you, old man."

I stows my light and dodges behind the captain so the lieutenant won't see me. His voice comes over from under the hatch, where the hand torches is makin' a lot of bluish light.

"Captain will be flooding in a minute. Hold hard and stand to it. When I open you won't know what's happened. Anything's a bit of all right in face of chlorine. Altogether, and lussy now: 'God Save the King.'"

God Save the King it is, lussy-all.

There's talkin' now, kind o' shrill, while the captain's fingerin' with the flood valves. "You, Swipes," torpedoes calls.

"What cheer, old soak?" Swipes wants to know. "That two bob you owes me against pay day. Lay you a wager on it."

"Take you up, you lubber. What's odds?"

"If we makes the White Horse you owes me double. If we doesn't I'll wipe it off. What say?"

"Says you're dusty. Wet you up in a minute."

"Breathe easy, men," the captain calls, and pulls the flood valves.

There ain't much racket from the men, with the water pourin' in, account o' queer feelin' to it. Sea's all right outside, but disturbin' in a manner when it's comin' up from your feet and you can't step out o' it.

"Gosh, first cox'un," Swipes grumbles. "How 'bout me gettin' a slicker out o' the kit?"

"Avast, gab," says the first.

The captain stands steady, me keepin' behind. The water's about up to knees and somebody complains, maybe it's the kid. "Heads a buzzin'. Can't get my breath."

"Stand to it, men," the lieutenant braces 'em, his voice kind o' heavy. "Over pretty soon. Plenty of air on top."

The captain's lips is movin'. The water's comin' faster, so I can't hear. 'Sfunny, but I has the mind he's prayin' and mentionin' the ship's company. I minds I'm to stand by the captain, hard-all.

It's up to shoulders now. Most of the torches is swimmin' on the water, account o' men lettin' 'em go and keepin' busy with their hands tryin' to squeeze the buzzin' out o' their heads. Pretty much stopped breathin' altogether.

I'm not so cozylike in my own noodle, but I watch the captain's hand when he closes the flood valves and I sees it shakin'. He's got to move, with the water impedin', to reach the air valves. He reels a bit. I holds up my light with one hand and steadies him with t'other.

"Thanks, second," he sort o' whispers. "Must have the air now."

He makes the valve, me holdin' him, and the air hisses. It's three seconds, maybe four, when he stirs. I see he's tryin' to raise his arm and can't.

"Lively, second," he says, gaspy. "Up my arm! Touch of chlorine's got me. Up arm for lieutenant, then you jump for station. I'll be staying with the—"

"Up arm, it is, sir," I says, and raises his hand.

He starts sinkin' into the water where we stands, but I grabs him. The lieutenant pulls the hatch lever.

Whether I see it or not, which I think I do, the hatch lifts back. There's a suck-

in' noise, and a pull that sort o' gets a body by his innards.

All I knows is I'm wonderin' where captain and me is, turnin' and twistin' like we're doin', and I gets a flash o' thought that maybe we won't catch up with the others, us bein' over by the valves instead o' under hatch where the others is grabbed up first, head-on.

Then I'm stabbed, sort of, with a bit o' daylight, which the sea shuts out prompt. I get it again, and there we are, me tangled all with the captain, my head in his stomach, him fillin' with water account o' his mouth bein' open.

I tries to straighten out, but can't, much, bein' pretty done in. I'm wabby, anyway, on the matter o' daylight bein' there so sudden and unexpected.

And I get a crazy notion I'm hearin' somebody yellin':

"Hey, you, Slim!"

'Struth! And it sounds like Sandy. I'm just thinkin' o' it when I passes out, complete-like.

When I knows anything, I'm lookin' up from blankets on a deck to the funnels of a bally destroyer. Sandy, the blighter, pretty pale around the gills and on all fours, is lookin' down at me.

"Ship's discipline, able-bodied," I reproves him.

"Aye, aye, second cox'un," he says, but he grins, and I bawls him out.

He's talkin' back out o' regulations when the destroyer's commandin' officer comes around a turret. He's holdin' up our lieutenant, who's in dry flannels and walkin' unsteady.

We starts to get to our feet, and I see Sandy's still shaky, too.

"Keep easy, lads," the destroyer's commander orders us, good humored. "You'll be shipshape in an hour or so. Your lieutenant wants a look at you."

We ain't in any kind o' shape for inspection, though Sandy has lipped somebody out o' a duffle suit, but the lieutenant ain't so particular as he was.

He mentions somethin' about me standin' by the captain. It's a lot o' eyewash he gives me, which I takes no account of, except when he says they're gettin' him

around all right. It's what he says to Sandy I listens to, hard-all.

What I gathers is that the swab come up conscious and struck out for shore, which he would, bein' in a hurry, but his legs shoved him t'other way. Of course, the gaffer claimed he saw the destroyer steam-in' in from the horizon, and that he minded to turn around, give-all and make a try o' meetin' it.

I calls it fishy, him bein' halfway to shore already, but after awhile what the destroyer swabs took for a porpoise cuttin' capers turned up to be Sandy's legs with a couple o' kicks left in 'em and they hauls him aboard.

"It's what saved us, Bolton," the lieutenant says. "If you hadn't been nervy enough to stake-all on getting to the destroyer and bringing it up, we wouldn't be here. Not a man-jack of us had strength to make shore."

More eyewash, but lieutenants can't be corrected, so Sandy gets away with it. Anyhow, the destroyer was there when we comes bobbin' up unannounced, with Sandy spottin' me from where he's sittin' pamperedlike, on deck.

III.

WE don't stop at the White Horse, account o' it bein' eight o'clock when the destroyer puts us ashore at Base, and some account o' the White Horse bein' a bit out o' the way what with Sandy and me not navigatin' so brisk on our feet.

"It 'll be expired by now," Sandy remarks when we turns into the gate o' his and Bella's quarters.

"It 'll be plumb mortified," I agrees.

"You go in first, Slim," he gives me, which I thinks is astonishin'.

"Me first, my eye!" I says. "Head-on, able-bodied. Show her your legs. They'll be better for pettin' now since we trimmed you up to be a torpedo."

He shakes his head, glum. "No good there, second cox'un. I measured 'em off. Ain't squeezed an inch."

"What 'll we do?" I asks to that.

"Chums, is all," says he.

So we chums it and goes in together.

"Hard-a-dive, you, Slim!" says Bella,

reachin' for somethin' as soon as she sees me, givin' me blame for it's not bein' six o'clock.

But Sandy stands by.

"He had to come up through the engine room hatch to be gettin' here now," he tells her, lively.

"And we had to shoot him out o' the tube," I adds.

"Is that your story?" she wants to know, sharp.

"S'help me, girl," Sandy says, and I chips in: "'Struth."

The blue eyes she's got with the dancin' things in 'em take Sandy in for awhile, level-like, then they run me up and down. Somethin' in the way we stands, kind o' holdin' onto each other, account o' the way we come up, must hit her sort o' funny.

She laughs, the way she does when she tosses her head back and makes it sound like bells is ringin' some place.

Then she comes down to a smile, and to bein' wistful, as I likes to see her most. She says, noddin' a little, as if she's commendin':

"It's a good story, at that, and you couldn't have gone clear through the colonies, at the White Horse, or you couldn't o' thought it up."

Sandy goes blowed, and there's pain in my face which she sees.

"Come here, Slim," she says. "Full on."

I makes it up to her, ready on chance for a hard-a-dive, but she's like the captain with that whimperin' kid, gentle.

"I'm givin' you a kiss, Slim, for the pair of you gettin' here at all," she says, and she does. Then she hands me orders.

"Take station in the kitchen, second cox'un. I'll think about rabbit, if this able-bodied gives me the straight o' how many pints it really was."

THE END



THE LAST CHANCE

WASHINGTON and his army

Driven from hill to vale;

Hunger, rags and the harpies

Of doubt as forces fail;

Then Saratoga and Yorktown

And a freeman's lusty hail.

The war zone of the spirit

Within your breast, or mine;

The poison gas and gunfire,

The sag of a reeling line—

Then up, for blood of manhood

Is richly red as wine.

The last chance always threatens

Where battle's motif thrums;

Then is the time for banners,

For screaming fifes and drums;

While life remains to rally,

The last chance never comes!

Olin Lyman.



The Return of George Washington*

By **GEORGE F. WORTS**

Author of "Red Darkness," "The Golden Brute," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PREVIOUS PARTS

LAURENCE GALLOWAY, managing editor of *The Daily It*, New York tabloid, was given the exclusive story of the epochal experiment of Professor J. Hendricks Morgan, whereby he had perfected an apparatus which would resurrect the dead, given the skeleton. *The It* described the rebirth of a guinea pig, of Lawrence's own dog, and stated that the professor was prepared to resurrect any man the American public selected through vote in *The It*. George Washington was chosen. Jason Ortola, financial backer and chemist, announced that the formula would remain private, and resurrections would be performed at a million per person. The world went mad, and Lawrence had the sensation of seeing *The It's* circulation rise to astounding figures, and having all newspaperdom damn him for keeping the story to himself. Then, one fateful night, after the bones of the First American had been taken by airmen from Mount Vernon, a young man, calling himself Colonel Washington, stepped from a glass case, he was twenty-three years old, and asked for General Braddock. Through a rioting mob he was led to the professor's house, where Galloway awaited the bewildered young man.

CHAPTER XXII. (Continued).

THERE IS NO DEATH!

NEVER had Larry felt so sorry for any man. The historic steadiness of George Washington's character would be rudely shaken before he made any

kind of adjustment to the chaos into which science had hurled him.

George Washington, with little jerks of his head, was peering dazedly about him, his expression woefully bewildered.

Larry heard him mutter: "These lights. All these lights."

This story began in the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* for October 15.

*Copyright, 1927, by George F. Worts

"They want your photograph," Larry shouted, and realized that the camera, as a practical instrument, had not come into the world until after the middle of the last century.

"I do not understand."

Larry heard men calling his name. Reporters, beyond the rigid wall of guards, were trying to get his attention. Beyond them were faces, faces, faces, an endless sea of upturned faces, glimmering, undulating in waves under the hot white radiance of the Kleigs.

Little balls of white fire floated up over their heads. Flashlights. The air was acrid with the fumes of burning magnesium.

Larry's knees were trembling. There was hardly enough strength in his legs to support him.

"Colonel Washington—" he began.

A woman he at first did not recognize broke through the guards. Her bobbed hair was disarrayed. Her white dress was torn off at one shoulder.

Under his breath he groaned: "Polly Morgan!"

Another woman followed her, likewise disarrayed, wild-eyed. Not until minutes later did he identify her as the chic Mrs. Horace Glen Islington, otherwise Polly's Aunt Sally.

To Larry's horror, Polly Morgan, staggering to the bewildered Washington, seized his hands and, before he could resist, pulled him down, reached up on tiptoes and kissed his cheek.

His worst anticipations for her were realized in that revolting moment.

She turned from Washington with the girlish fixed smile with which Larry had already been made painfully familiar and gazed as sweetly as her wild condition would permit into the banks at Kleigs. Then, slowly, as if she had been rehearsed, she turned and walked into the house.

He said hoarsely: "Mr. Washington, if you will come into the house with me—"

"We'll take him into the library," Aunt Sally shrilly offered, but Larry still did not recognize her, so disheveled she was, with a bleeding scratch along one side of her aristocratic nose and a long smudge of dirt across her forehead.

Placing her hand at Washington's elbow, Mrs. Islington urged him into the house. Jason Ortola limped after her. One of his Oxforas was missing.

The door closed after them.

In the front line of the mob that pressed about the veranda Larry saw the faces of Grenville Brown, of the *New York Sun*; Riley of the *Daily News*; Orcutt of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*; Billings of the *Baltimore Sun*. All were calling to him and gesticulating. Larry bent down and shouted into Brown's ear:

"What can I do? He can't stand any more of this!"

"Let us in!" Brown shouted back. "You've framed this the way you framed it from the start!"

A red-haired man behind Brown cupped large hairy hands about his mouth and called up:

"Mr. Galloway, I'm in charge of the Radio Corporation's field installation here. I can run a line to a microphone in the room you use. I'll hook up the line to loud speakers on that searchlight platform and the crowd can listen down there. I'll hook up another loud speaker at the press tents. Every broadcasting station in the country is connected on a loop from my tent over there. I'll plug in the whole works on one circuit, then everybody can hear all that Washington says."

Larry asked: "How long will it take?"

"Not more than ten minutes," the radio man answered. "Most of the wires I need are already up."

Larry decided without hesitation: "Go to it! I'll open that window at the end of the house and you can pass the microphone in."

Brown shouted, as Larry turned away from the veranda rail:

"How about the rest of us?"

"Isn't that arrangement satisfactory?"

"Like hell it is! What right have you to hog the whole works?"

Jason Ortola came limping out on the veranda.

"Galloway," he said, "Washington wants you."

"Wants me?"

"Yes, you. He wants to talk to you."

He's somehow got it into his head that you're in charge. He wants to talk to you alone."

Larry, for the first time that evening, smiled. To Grenville Brown he said:

"Did you hear that?"

"No!"

"Washington wants to see me alone."

"Apple sauce! You framed it up."

Larry's triumphant little smile vanished.

He leaned over the railing and snarled into Brown's face:

"You can go to the devil!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TALK TO MILLIONS.

GEORGE WASHINGTON was seated at the long table in the library when

Larry went in. There was a glass of milk in one hand and a sandwich in the other. Bewilderment lingered in his face.

Aunt Sally was bending over him solicitously.

"Isn't he too marvelous for words?" she demanded.

Washington frowned, but did not acknowledge her presence otherwise. Polly fluttered about behind his chair, as if she longed to touch him.

"He simply doesn't realize a thing," Aunt Sally exclaimed. "Mr. Galloway, was there ever such a moment in the history of the world? Aren't you positively thrilled to the core? You poor boy, you look absolutely all in."

"I am all in."

For perhaps the first time in her life, he realized, Aunt Sally was satisfying her greed for sensation.

"I was just asking President Washington about his wife, but he doesn't remember her. Isn't it weird?"

"I am not married," Washington said wearily.

"Her name," Aunt Sally reminded the dazed man joyously, "was Betsy Ross."

"Her name," Larry wearily corrected her, "happened to be Martha Custis."

Aunt Sally's laughter was silver sleigh bells on a frosty night.

"History never did like me."

A tapping occurred at the window. Larry raised the shade and peered out. A man in khaki overalls raised a nicked microphone into the light. A black wire attached to it vanished among the trees.

Larry lifted the window. The man, grinning nervously, said:

"It's plugged in, Mr. Galloway. Just put it on the table between you and—um—Mr. Washington. About fifty million people will hear every word you say, so don't do any cussing or we'll have to yank you off the air!"

Larry pulled in a dozen feet of the wire, shut the window and lowered the shade.

He placed the shining instrument on the table a few feet from George Washington.

The bewildered young man stared at the microphone. And from the microphone he glanced quickly at Larry.

Larry seated himself across from him.

He said: "You wanted to talk to me, Mr. Washington?"

Washington answered: "I want an explanation. I want to know what I am doing here. I want to know who these ladies are. You are the first one I can remember seeing when—when—" He stopped.

"When you came back to life?"

"I do not understand. I understand nothing of what is happening. What is that thing?"

"That," Larry answered, "is called a microphone."

"What is its purpose?"

Larry drew a deep breath. How could one explain the abstruse mysteries of radio to a man who had died before any practical application of electricity had been attempted; to a man who had died before the telephone, the telegraph, the electric light, the electric motor existed?

"This," he slowly replied, "is a device by which your voice and my voice are being transmitted to all parts of the American continent."

Washington interrupted: "Who are you?"

"My name is Lawrence Galloway. I am the managing editor of a New York newspaper."

"Will you explain my presence in this place?"

"I will attempt to," Larry returned. "And I assure you, Mr. Washington, that I am being truthful. We are not Contre-cœur's men. We are Americans of a new and, to you, a bewildering age."

Jason Ortola limped out of the room.

Aunt Sally had, this time, been pacing up and down behind Washington. Now she whirled about, but Larry lifted a hand to stop her before she could speak. He did not want the dignity of this interview spoiled by her frivolousness.

Polly, seated at the end of the table, was staring intently at Washington.

Aunt Sally resumed her pacing.

He went on: "You will have to grasp the unbelievable fact, Mr. Washington, that you have been dead for one hundred and thirty years."

"I cannot grasp that fact," the young man said stubbornly.

"I will try putting it another way. Your memory stops with General Braddock's fight with the French and Indians on the Monongahela below Fort Duquesne, which began on the ninth of July, seventeen hundred and fifty-five.

"You will simply have to take my word that you have been brought to life again, in another age, one hundred and seventy years after your last memory."

The blue eyes of Washington were fixed intently upon his face. For the first time, bewilderment was absent from them. They were clear and piercing and, Larry thought, extraordinarily cold.

"I think you are telling the truth," he said.

"I will give you a very brief sketch of what has occurred since that time," Larry went on. "The battle at which your memory stops is known by us to-day as one of the engagements in the Colonial wars. In a subsequent attack on Fort Duquesne, the French surrendered to you."

Washington's eyes were glistering now.

"I returned to Virginia?"

"You did."

"And attacked Fort Duquesne again?"

"You did."

"By what road?"

"The one known as the Pennsylvania road."

Washington's mouth settled into its long, stubborn line.

"Not the Virginia road?"

"No, Mr. Washington. The French surrendered. And you returned to Mount Vernon and married Mrs. Martha Custis. In seventeen fifty-nine."

Washington's eyes narrowed. His jaw muscles hardened, but he made no comment.

"The American Colonies united in the early seventies of that century," Larry continued, "and in seventeen seventy-six declared war against England, partly because of burdensome taxes. You were tendered the post of commander-in-chief of the Colonial forces—and accepted."

"And fought England?" Washington incredulously demanded.

"And won."

"But I am a loyal British subject!"

"You were—in seventeen fifty-five," Larry hastily reminded him. "From seventeen fifty-five onward, one unpleasantness after another arose between England and the American Colonies. You and other Colonial leaders agreed that the Colonies must have independence. The war is now known as the Revolutionary War or the War of Independence. It ended in seventeen eighty-one."

Washington folded his arms upon his broad chest and sank his chin into his collar. His cold blue eyes remained unwaveringly upon Larry's.

"The united Colonies became known as the United States of America, and you were elected the first President. The capital of the United States was then at Philadelphia. In eighteen hundred it was moved to Washington, District of Columbia—a city named after yourself. It has been there ever since. The city is on the Potomac River, in accordance with a wish you once expressed."

Bewilderment was returning to Washington's face again.

"You served two terms of four years each as President," Larry hastily went on, "then retired to your plantation at Mount Vernon."

Washington interrupted in a thick voice: "When did I—die?"

"In seventeen ninety-nine. You have since been honored as the Father of your country."

The young man slowly shook his head. His eyes dropped to the microphone. His hand reached out and he touched it gingerly with the tips of his fingers.

"You say that this silver thing is carrying the words that we are saying to fifty million people?"

"Yes, Mr. Washington."

"It is beyond my comprehension. Let me ask you some questions, sir. Have these United States of America prospered since my death?"

"The United States has become the richest, most powerful nation in the world."

"Richer and more powerful than England?"

"Yes, Mr. Washington."

"Than Spain or France?"

"Than any nation."

Washington again slowly shook his head. And Larry recalled, from his recent prodigious reading, that Washington had always been grave, just short of being sad; that he seldom shook hands or gossiped; that he would listen to jokes with a straight face; that he so seldom smiled that once, when he had laughed in a theater, the newspapers were prompt to record it.

"The population of the United States," Larry enlightened him, "is now estimated at one hundred and twenty-five millions."

Washington's eyes grew round again, and again he wearily shook his head.

"My dear boy, the population of New York City alone—" Aunt Sally impulsively began, when Larry's angry gesture silenced her.

She hastened to Polly and whispered into her ear, and Polly, who had been dividing her attention between Washington and Larry, suddenly bit her lower lip.

Larry, with Washington's fascinated attention, went on expounding the glories of the United States of America. He told him pithily of her successful wars, her industrial development, he graphically described to his absorbed auditor the invention and perfection of the steamboat, the railroad and the telegraph.

He spoke in a clear, incisive voice as a

man well might who realized that fifty million listeners were paying the closest heed to his every syllable. And he was glad that this opportunity had been given to him.

In the laboratory, the situation had all but escaped from his control when the reporters began asking ridiculous questions. He was proud to be in this position, introducing to the American people their greatest hero; doing it with dignity, with intelligence, keeping this stern, admirable young man on the pedestal where he belonged.

How easily might Grenville Brown or some of those others have reduced him again and again to angry bewilderment; perhaps made of him a laughing stock!

Repeatedly Washington commented: "It is beyond my comprehension." Or, "I do not understand."

Once he said: "Modern America, as you have drawn it before my eyes, is nothing to me but chaos."

"This au-to-mo-bile"—he pronounced the word slowly, hesitantly—"I cannot picture it at all, darting over the roads faster than the fastest horse can run. Or this machine that flies into the air. Or the other machine that goes so swiftly along two rails. Or vessels that cross the Atlantic in six days without sails. How were these miracles achieved?"

"By years of patient endeavor," Larry replied. "In each case, the man who sponsored it was laughed at by the public. In each case, it was a crude experiment. The inventive genius and the patience of man has perfected each one until, now, our civilization is built upon them; would collapse without them."

"I cannot comprehend," Washington repeated.

"This instrument I am touching now," Larry went on, "is called a telephone. It came into existence perhaps sixty years ago. There are millions of telephones in constant daily use. The voice, when you speak into this small rubber mouthpiece, is carried over wires to the man you wish to converse with."

"Many American business deals are transacted over the telephone. America is a vast network of wires, connecting all

cities. If the telephone were taken away, American business would go into a panic."

Washington shook his head wonderingly.

"I do not understand how the human voice can reach out over so many miles."

"This device, this microphone," Larry went on, "is, with the complex machinery of which it is a part, perhaps the most wonderful development of them all. By means of this strange invisible energy, which we call electricity, our voices, as we speak now, are sent through the air without wires, across continents, even across oceans. People as far-away as England, even as far-away as Australia, clearly hear every word we are saying. By the same agency, in connection with the telephone, a business man in New York may talk to a business man in London."

Washington commented: "It is an age of incomprehensible wonders. It is an age of scientific miracles. And you say that science is responsible for my being here, upon this earth, again."

"Your being upon this earth again," Larry told him, "is considered the scientific triumph of all ages. Practically every branch of science has contributed its part to make the miracle possible. And this mysterious power, electricity, was applied in perhaps three of its different forms."

"I understand that least of all," said Washington. "I am, frankly, in a daze. So many of your words are meaningless. What a strange vocabulary the American nation must be using! What strange laws must have been passed in keeping with all the changes! We did not realize how simple life was—one hundred and seventy years ago! I must see all of the wonders you have told me about. I must see the places that were familiar to me—one hundred and seventy years ago! What has happened to my plantation?"

His voice was wistful and eager.

"It has been preserved as it was left when you died."

"And Fort Duquesne—now?"

"Is the site of blast furnaces in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

"Why," Washington suddenly cried in a voice of desperate sadness, "was I brought back to this?"

"The American people," Larry throatily explained, "wished you, more than any American who ever lived, to be brought back. You are their greatest hero."

"But what good can come of it? One hundred and thirty years, you say, have elapsed since my death. I can remember nothing later than one hundred and seventy years ago. I find myself in a bewildering new age, founded upon strange inventions which are beyond my ability to understand. You are talking a new language. You are faced, doubtless, by queer and baffling problems. What will be expected of me?"

"All America will want to see you. America will want your opinion on practically everything you see."

"I am too tired now even to contemplate that prodigious task," said Washington. "My head is aching. I cannot think. My brain can take in no more. Will I sleep in this house to-night?"

"A room has been prepared for you. Before you retire, do you wish to say anything to your millions of listeners?"

Washington gazed bleakly at the microphone.

"It is too soon. Later, when I have collected my thoughts, I will perhaps speak to America over this strange, incomprehensible instrument. I will say this now: America must not look upon me as the figure you say I became after the conquest of Fort Duquesne.

"I have been addressed to-night as 'General Washington' and 'President Washington.' I am certain that I wish to be considered only as the man I was at the time of my last recollections. I am Colonel Washington. It will please me to be addressed simply as Colonel Washington."

He arose quickly from the microphone. Larry watched him with shining eyes. How the American people would love this grave, unaffected man; would admire and respect his sincerity, his frankness, and his pride!

This youthful Washington, Larry reflected, was the embodiment of all those qualities the American people demanded in their heroes. It struck him that the American people had been using this very man as the pattern to which all their heroes must conform.

A sparkling in the darkness of the dining room doorway attracted his attention and he saw, standing there, Mrs. Gore—the mysterious, hostile woman who had taken up Polly's abandoned duties as house-keeper. The woman who tortured cats in the interests of biology!

Her pale-gray eyes were fixed coldly upon George Washington in a stare not unlike that of a reflective feline.

She had, Larry thought darkly, tortured, vivisected cats, helped her husband, the aloof Professor Gore, to analyze their nervous systems, in the elaborate preparations which had gone into the remaking of George Washington.

She was not looking upon him as the object of a nation's, a world's, emotions, but as the product of laborious years spent with test tubes and scalpels.

The great diamond on her hands, as mysterious as the essence of her own personality, glittered and flashed.

"I will take him to his room," she said, in her slurring Southern voice. "It is ready." And she went to the stairway.

George Washington placed his right hand, lightly clasped, over his heart and bowed deeply, first to Polly, then to her aunt, in what is sometimes described as "the continental manner." He did not smile.

Bowing more briefly to Larry, he accompanied Mrs. Gore up the stairs.

Larry, following him with glowing eyes, did not see Aunt Sally gesturing frantically to Polly. He turned only in time to see Polly seize the microphone from the table and lift it to a level with her trembling gray lips.

Breathlessly she spoke to those tensely listening millions:

"Good evening, everybody! This is Polly Morgan. Hasn't it been simply thrilling? Colonel Washington has gone up to bed. We all hope that he will feel much more at home with us by to-morrow, don't we? The poor boy was simply all in. I want to wish everybody good night and to tell you that my thrilling experiences will be made into a film by the Classic Features Corporation. Good night, all! Polly Morgan signing off!"

"Good Heaven!" Larry moaned.

He removed the microphone from her hands, took it to the window, which he opened, and hurled it into the night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OLD STORY.

AUNT SALLY, when he turned about, was holding Polly in her arms, rapturously hugging her. Her face was flushed and her large blue eyes were excitedly shining.

So furious he almost sobbed, Larry cried: "How dared you do that?"

She retorted enthusiastically: "It was the greatest publicity stunt in history!"

"Publicity!" he groaned. "Publicity! Debasing a great moment with that cheap, horrible speech!"

Polly burst into tears. She dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

He raged: "I was trying to avoid just that kind of thing. You've spoiled everything!"

Aunt Sally ran her slim long fingers through her tousled blond bob. She said angrily:

"Don't take things so deuced seriously. What Polly said was no worse than the stupid, dull, pompous things you said!"

Wretchedly, he shook his head.

"Running up to him. Kissing him like that. Oh, my God!"

"You're acting like an ass. It was good publicity. They were both fine stunts. The first woman to kiss him! Millions of women will be furious with envy—and they'll all flock to see her picture!"

"Polly," he groaned, "how could you?"

"Don't blame her," Aunt Sally snapped. "Both ideas were mine. What are you kicking about? I didn't see you galloping out of the limelight! I've noticed that you've kept in the center of the stage ever since things started! Are you jealous?"

"Jealous!" repeated the wretched young man. "All I wanted was—was dignity. It's all I've been fighting for from the start. He mustn't be cheapened. I won't let him be cheapened!"

"Oh, stop being so silly. People don't

like so much dignity. They like thrills. Polly gave them two lovely ones. Here! Drink this milk and stop being hysterical!"

Larry ignored the glass of milk and sat down.

"You're a meddlesome, dangerous woman," he told her.

Aunt Sally laughed. "What I want to know is, what have you got against Polly?"

"What have I *got* against her?" he gasped.

"Yes; what have I got against her?"

"I think," he answered in a controlled voice, "that you and I understand each other perfectly, Mrs. Islington. You know what I wanted for Polly. You have deliberately gone against every wish I expressed. You seized her merely because she was an opportunity to gratify your greed for sensation!"

Aunt Sally laughed wildly. "Go on, go on!"

"I wanted to see her become what she promised to be—a fine woman. What is she becoming?"

"Oh, you reformers! What? What? I'll tell you, you pathetic deluded thing! She's becoming the only thing she could possibly become—a fine woman! You are simply obsessed with the notion that she mustn't enjoy her youth. Just as you are obsessed with the notion that George Washington must be made deadly dull."

She was pacing again, up and down, forth and back, from him to the end of the long rug, pivoting on one heel, returning as if she intended to attack him. Her blond, short hair stood out in wisps, in tags, in tangled knots.

One of her transparent stockings was torn and hung down below her knee in a long tongue. Her white kid slippers were almost black.

"Never have I heard such deadly conversation! Didn't you realize the poor fellow was dead already from excitement? You and your hellish dignity!"

Polly looked up. Her face was streaked with dirt and tears.

She stuttered: "Larry, w-why didn't you s-stop me?"

"Stop you! Stop you from racing up and kissing him? Stop you from grabbing

that microphone when I wasn't looking and making that horrible speech?"

Polly was huddled over, her arms crossing upon her breast, her hands clasping her shoulders.

"It makes me sick to have you th-think such th-things of me!"

Aunt Sally paused beside her chair:

"Polly, for heaven's sake, if you must fall in love, can't you pick some man who's amusing?"

"I'm not in love!" Polly gasped.

"You're both in love. You've been in love since you clapped eyes on each other. If not, why do you quarrel so?"

"Mrs. Islington, I want you to understand—" Larry began frigidly.

"I understand everything," she interrupted. "That's why I'm so wretched. You're wearing yourselves out fighting each other. If you weren't kneeling down and worshiping your dignity every solitary minute, you'd take her in your arms and— and have it over with! She adores you."

"Mrs. Islington, I assure you—" Larry thickly tried to head this impossible woman off.

"She weeps every time she talks to you on the phone. Her only desire in the world is to please you—as if any woman alive could please a man like you! Tell her you love her! Get it over with! And then please, please let her enjoy herself a little while!"

"Good Lord, Aunt Sally—" Polly began.

"I won't say any more," Aunt Sally assured her. "You two can fool yourselves, but you can't fool me."

She had stopped before a mahogany mirror. She was staring into it.

"Merciful Heaven, is that me?" Her hands flew to her hair, but did not touch it. They remained suspended beside her head as she gazed at her image fascinated.

She spun about.

"I've just learned that I'm going to spend the next fourteen hours in bed. I'll leave you to fight it out. *Hasn't* it been a thrilling evening!"

Larry and Polly were gazing at her resentfully.

The gay widow laughed sadly. "Larry, my dear, you're really a marvelous young

man. I admire you greatly. If I had my life to live over again, I'd marry a man exactly like you. Polly, don't stay up too late. You're really a sight. You—you look at least twenty-two! Good-night, children."

They murmured good night and watched her until the last battered slipper had dragged itself from view up the stairs.

Then they examined each other. Larry presently arose and went over to Polly. With hands in pockets, he stood over her.

"Polly," he said, "I don't want you to think too harshly of me."

Polly did not raise her eyes.

"I don't think harshly of you. I think harshly of myself."

"You mustn't. Your aunt is probably right. I can look at life, as she says, from only one point of view. It's my worst shortcoming. I realize it. I'm wrong oftener than I realize. I don't want to hurt you."

She burst out miserably: "Why didn't you tell me not to go into the movies? You said at tea that day—the *only* time you've been near me—to take her advice."

"Why not?" he said stonily.

With large, tearful brown eyes she looked up at him.

"I'll do just what you tell me to do."

"Why should you?" he insisted.

Her eyes were suddenly wet. Impulsively she rose. She placed her hands on his shoulders and laid her cheek against his chest with a weary sigh.

"I—I don't know," she whispered. "I—I've been so damned bewildered ever since this all started. I'm not used to excitement. I want somebody to tell me what to do. I adore Aunt Sally, but I—I respect your opinion more than hers—anybody's. You aren't bewildered or dazed. You know what I ought to do."

Larry put her gently away from him, but retained her hands.

"Polly," he said soberly, "my life hasn't been like hers. I've never had any time to play. I've had to be serious, and it hurts when people kid me about it. Believe me, you and she aren't the only ones. I want to be honest with you. I try my best to be honest with everybody. That's why I'm

up in the air now. I don't know what to advise you—and I haven't the right to advise you, anyhow."

Polly averted her eyes; said nothing.

"Take her advice," he went on. "She knows how to play, how to get the most fun out of life. Stop worrying about my opinion and have a good time."

She glanced up at him brightly.

"Go ahead with my picture contract?"

It hurt him to say "Of course!" but he managed it. And added, qualifying, in spite of his intentions: "You can't back out of it now, anyhow. You've publicly announced it."

He released her hands and Polly said: "I think we'd better hit the hay. I'm absolutely a wreck. Good night, Larry!"

She was half way to the stairs when Jason Ortola came limping in from the kitchen. His eyes were smoldering fires in their deep sockets. His slash of a mouth was compressed, as if with pain.

"Polly, your father is very ill. A complete nervous breakdown. After the experiment, he went into the basement and smashed his alcohol still into bits. Muller has been with him since. He has been only partly conscious for the last two hours. I sent him to Hartford in an ambulance. Muller went with him."

"I'll start at once," Polly said.

The chemist compressed his thin lips and shook his head.

"There's nothing you can do. Muller will attend to everything. Your father simply needs a long rest, away from all excitement. That means a sanatorium for, I should say, several months. I think his alcoholism is largely responsible. It is a great pity. He has an iron constitution, and will, without question, pull through. But he must be managed more carefully after this."

"I should never have left here," Polly said in a woeful voice.

"You could have done nothing with him. It was the excitement. Now, thank God, it's over. The future will certainly be easier. What are your plans, Polly?"

"I haven't any."

Ortola said: "I am going to Hartford to see your father has every possible attention. I must be in New York by to-morrow noon.

Do you think you can handle the situation alone, Galloway?"

"I'll do my best," Larry answered. "It's a job. I think the farm should be better policed."

The chemist said that he would attend to that. "I'll see the Governor in Hartford and ask for more troops, and I'll send up another hundred guards from New York. Washington, I hear, has retired. How long did he talk on the radio?"

"Almost two hours."

"I suppose you've made no plans."

"None," said Larry. "I'll talk to him in the morning."

"The whole thing has come off splendidly. If you need me, I can be reached at my Newark plant to-morrow afternoon. Good night, Galloway."

"Good night."

The chemist gazed curiously at Polly.

"Good night, Polly."

She said softly: "Good night, Jason."

When he had gone, she yawned and said: "Aren't you going to bed, Larry?"

"I've got to work."

"You poor kid! Can I make you some coffee?"

Larry seated himself at a typewriter, inserted a sheet of paper and looked up. Polly was staring at him with round, troubled eyes.

"I'm full of enough stimulus to run me for a year," he said and tried to laugh, but it was hardly more than a groan.

Tears filled her eyes again. She turned abruptly and went up the stairs. His eyes remained upon her.

At the top of the stairs she stopped and looked back.

"Good night, Old Dignity!"

He briefly waved his hand.

"Good night, Gloria Swanson!"

Polly disappeared.

For a moment he considered the keyboard. Then he tapped out in capitals at the top of the sheet:

MY IMPRESSIONS OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

By Lawrence Galloway

George Washington, reborn to-night in the laboratory of Professor Morgan, requires the

support of no heroic legends. With his own nobility of character, his own courtly poise, his own alert, forceful mind, he begs nothing of glamorous tradition.

Larry's prodding fingers stopped. He read the two sentences, frowning. He removed and crumpled the sheet, inserted a new one and began again:

The man who once made history will make history again. My two hour talk with him, which was broadcast to millions of radio listeners, clearly established that he will bring to this present stormy era a fresh and resolute viewpoint; will with honesty and frankness analyze this new America in which he finds himself; will unhesitatingly reprove the citizens of this nation which he fathered for the faults and weaknesses he finds; will, in short, prepare us for and guide us to a finer and richer civilization.

Larry stopped and read it over.

A mocking voice said: "Stupid, dull, pompous things."

"No," he declared vehemently to himself. "Truthful things!"

The voice derided: "Washington must be made deadly and dull."

He groaned—and tore the sheet from the typewriter, to try once more.

I have looked for two hours into the steady, piercing blue eyes of George Washington. I have studied him. I have weighed his every word as he uttered it. I have come surely to the conclusion that his nobility of character, his courtly poise, his swift and forceful processes of thought will . . . truth, truth, truth, truth, the truth.

"I! I! I! I!" chanted the gay, disembodied spirit of Mrs. Horace Glen Islington.

"But," he argued, "I tried to keep it dignified!"

"You and your hellish dignity! Gallop out of the limelight! Giddyap! Giddyap!"

"I'm a sap."

"You're jealous of Polly."

Larry shook his head. All these derisive voices. He must concentrate. In an effort to do so, he pressed his palms against his temples.

He lighted a cigarette. He looked disgustedly at the keyboard.

Dawn was creeping in at the windows by

the time his impressions of the new George Washington had been reduced to a form that satisfied him.

CHAPTER XXV.

A HUMAN BEING.

A BLANKET of hot golden sunlight upon his face aroused the earnest managing editor of *The Daily It* at three o'clock in the afternoon. He looked at his wrist-watch. The time was, actually, three-fifteen. He had been asleep eleven hours.

It seemed to him that every joint in his body was sore. He felt absolutely limp, burned out. His eyes ached.

By pushing himself up on his elbow he could look out a window and across a bright green field. He saw the leaves of an elm tree rustling in a vagrant breeze. He heard the murmuring of the brook. A warm current of air, sweet with the odor of some flower, crept in at the window. He sniffed approvingly.

Larry seated himself on the edge of the bed and reached for a cigarette and matches as the white porcelain doorknob stealthily revolved and the door opened sufficiently to admit the anxious face of McWhorter.

The reporter's expression was gladdened by a smile.

"Goshamighty, boss, I was beginning to think we'd have to put you in that white cylinder to bring you back to life!"

Larry asked him what was new. "How's Washington?"

"He's fine. The morning and noon papers just came up by plane. I'll go get 'em."

He left and Larry went to the window. A group of perhaps twenty men were in the front yard, talking. He saw other men lounging about the small tent city which had been erected to accommodate newspaper men, telegraph operators, news reel photographers, radio crews. Smoke was rising from a stove near the community mess tent.

Larry saw no signs of mobs, but he heard, in the distance, a muffled roaring. Later he would learn that the country for miles

about was swarming with countless thousands of people; that all roads leading to this section were hopelessly jammed with traffic; that enterprising men with telescopes on distant hilltops were charging, for one peep at the Morgan house, one dollar, two dollars, even five.

The whirring of an airplane drew his eyes toward the bright sky. A biplane was banking, preparing to alight in the flat meadow behind the laboratory.

He saw it come to earth; saw it immediately surrounded by men in blue uniforms; saw it at once take to the air again. He grinned. Detective Sergeant Walker evidently had the situation well in hand!

Connecticut troops, he would later learn, surrounded the Morgan farm in shoulder-to-shoulder formation, a human picket fence of bayonets.

McWhorter returned with a heavy bundle of morning and afternoon newspapers. Flashlight photographs of Washington, dazed and staring, occupied every front page. He glanced at the headlines. Unanimously they screamed that Washington lived again. The feeling of last night's mob panic was in them all.

When he had glanced over the front pages, after briefly scanning his two prominent stories in *The It*, he looked into the inner pages. Congress, he learned, had approved an appropriation of fifty million dollars with which to pay for the resurrection of the fifty greatest dead Americans.

Congress was frantically determined to dictate George Washington's program.

Professor Morgan, in a serious but not critical condition, had had opiates administered in a Hartford hospital and, at last report, was still sleeping.

George Washington, in the Morgan farmhouse, had arisen at 8 A.M., breakfasted upon oatmeal, ham and eggs, coffee and toast, and had consented to be interviewed.

Larry eagerly read the questions and answers.

"What was your first thought upon returning to life?"

"I was bewildered."

"Did you think you were in hell?"

"I believe I did."

"What do you think of modern America?"

"It is too soon to express an opinion."

"What do you think of the radio?"

"I do not understand it."

"What are your plans, colonel?"

"I cannot answer that until I have consulted with Mr. Galloway."

"Ah!" breathed Larry.

"Listen, boss," the faithful McWhorter interrupted him, "let me skip down and cook you up a mess of eggs and fix you some coffee."

"Go to it," said Larry, and read on.

"Were you in love with Martha Custis or Sally Fairfax when you can last remember anything?"

"I refuse to answer any questions of that nature."

"What do you think of modern women?"

"The few I have seen are charming."

"What do you think of the short skirts the girls of to-day are wearing?"

"I won't answer such questions!"

"Good boy!" murmured Larry.

"Are you glad to be alive?"

"No normal man wishes to be dead."

"You said last night over the radio: 'Why was I brought to this?'"

"That was last night. I was bewildered. To-day, I am beginning to find myself."

"Would you rather be alive in this age or in the eighteenth century?"

"I would rather not answer that kind of question."

"Is your memory a perfect blank, colonel, after that day in July, near Fort Duquesne, in seventeen fifty-five?"

"It is."

"You haven't the slightest recollection of being the first American President or leading the Colonial forces against the British?"

"None."

"Have you any recollection of any kind of your existence since then?"

"None."

"But you must have been existing somewhere, colonel. Do you think you have been in heaven or hell or where?"

"I have no means of knowing where I have been. My memory, all consciousness of my existence, ceased one hundred and seventy years ago."

"Would you accept the Presidency of the United States if it were offered to you?"

"I will not answer that question."

"They can't rattle him," Larry approved. "And they won't rattle him."

"What do you think of modern men's clothes?"

"I thought at first that they were effeminate. I think now that they are sensible. They are comfortable."

"Would you prefer wearing the costume of your own time?"

"No."

"Does it surprise you to know that you have been, since your death, the idol of all Americans—that upward of one hundred and thirty millions venerate your name; that your birthday is a national holiday?"

"It does, naturally."

"Do you know that the principles of American democracy you laid down have, in many cases, been violated?"

Washington did not consider that an answer was necessary.

"Do you know that your last speech to the American people is chiefly remembered because you said that America must enter into no entangling alliances?"

Washington seemed greatly interested by this question.

"Did I say that?" he answered.

"What do you think of it now?"

"If I said it," was his grave answer, "I must have meant it."

"What do you think of the prohibition amendment?"

"What is the prohibition amendment?"

"A law that prohibits any one in the United States and its possessions from drinking, buying or selling any beverage containing more than one half of one per cent of alcohol by volume."

"What do the American people think of it?" Washington countered.

"Some of them are for it and some of them are against it."

"Is the law being obeyed?"

He was puzzled by the outburst of laughter that answered him.

"It is being violated," he was told, "in every city, town, village, hamlet in the nation. What is your opinion of that?"

He answered slowly: "I have not been in

this new America long enough to form opinions on such difficult problems."

"Do you realize that people for miles around here are crazy for a glimpse of you?"

"I have been told so."

"When will you let the American people see you?"

"I said before that I wish to consult with Mr. Galloway before I make any announcement of my plans."

"What is the one thing, or the one place, you want to see most?"

"My home at Mount Vernon."

"What next?"

"The site of Fort Duquesne."

"And then what, colonel?"

"All America."

"What do you think of modern firearms?"

The glow that came promptly to Washington's eyes showed how thoroughly his interest had been captured.

"I have not seen modern firearms. I should like to."

One of "Professor Morgan's Constabulary," who was in the crowd about Washington, removed a Colt's automatic pistol from his holster.

Colonel Washington, as he had elected to be styled, examined the weapon with the greatest interest.

"I'd like to fire this," he said.

He was conducted to an open field beside the house. He pulled the trigger, aiming the pistol at the ground.

Some one urged him to pull it again.

Washington did so. For the first time since he was restored to life, he was seen to smile. It was a quick, grim smile.

He continued to pull the trigger until the magazine was empty. He gazed from the pistol to the holes in the turf with awe and amazement.

"Nine shots from one pistol!" he marveled. "With a company of a dozen men armed with these, I would have engaged every Indian and every Frenchman in America!"

"You hated the Indians, colonel?"

"Most heartily. Where are the Indians now? I have not seen one."

"Almost gone, colonel. They have died

off. The few remaining ones live off by themselves on reservations. Many of them drank themselves to death; many starved to death; a few of those who remain have become millionaires because of the oil under their lands."

"Oil?" Washington repeated.

"Petroleum."

"Petro—" he began. "I do not understand."

An attempt was made to explain petroleum to him, and gasoline.

"I am sorry any Indians are rich," he presently interrupted. "Do they still scalp their enemies?"

He was told the Indians are now a subdued race, and was reminded that he had expressed a wish to use automatic pistols against the French.

"Indeed I would!" he exclaimed.

"Do you hate the French?"

"With every drop of blood in my veins!" he exclaimed.

"But, colonel, you later became very friendly with the French. One Frenchman, a man named Lafayette, became one of your bosom friends. You had a bedroom at Mount Vernon specially set aside for him."

"I did?" He seemed amazed.

"The French," he was told, "joined with you in the war against England which freed the American Colonies."

His amazement increased. "What treachery did they have in mind?"

"None, colonel. And since that time the French and the American people have been on terms of loving friendship."

"Times have changed," he murmured.

An attempt was made to draw forth from Colonel Washington an even more violent expression of opinion against the French, but he seemed to realize that he was on dangerous ground, and refused to commit himself.

Larry was frowning as he reflected: "I'll have to warn him. They trapped him that time."

The interview proceeded. Washington was asked what he thought of the airplanes which were continually flying over the Morgan farmhouse with loads of sight-seers.

"They are outside my imagination."

"Would you like to fly in one?"

Washington hesitated before answering, his eyes following a small monoplane that was skirting about high above.

"I would; yes."

A reporter told Colonel Washington that an American author had recently written a book about him which had caused a furor because in it he had stated that Washington was a drinking man.

Washington asked: "Why was there a furor?"

"Because," he was told, "the American public has been taught to look up to you as a man who had no vices. The book was called 'George Washington, the Human Being and the Hero.' The claim was made that the author besmirched your image."

"I have no quarrel with him," said Washington. "I was and am a human being. I am not aware of being vicious. I will read the book. Perhaps, in later life, I cultivated vices. I did not intend to."

He was asked: "Do you realize that, to us, your accent is strongly English?"

He answered: "Yours is very strange to me. And many of the words you use are unknown to me."

The questioning shifted back to American inventions. He was asked his opinion of electricity, the electric light.

"It is magical," he said.

"If Professor Morgan would consent to perform the experiment, which of your contemporaries, man or woman, would you select to bring back to life?"

(Continued on Page Ten.)

Larry turned to page ten, but he did not read page ten. His attention was captured by what he saw on page eleven.

It was a full page advertisement of the Kolledge Kut Klothing Manufacturing Company. Block type roared:

**GEORGE WASHINGTON FAVORS
KOLLEDGE KUT KLOTHES!**

**Our Summer Model 49-C in Gray Tweed
Fits Him Perfectly!**

From measurements obtained from old records, a Ready-to-Fit suit of Kolledge Kut Klothos was selected yesterday by Mr. Law-

rence Galloway in the Ready-to-Fit Department of Cromach Bros., and taken to the Morgan Laboratory by airplane.

President Washington has expressed his delight at the coolness, the smartness, the general all-around comfort of this popular model.

Such Approval Must Be Merited!

The 49-C Model; four pieces: coat, vest, trousers, and plus-fours, gray or brown—

WHILE THEY LAST—\$49.75!

**"What Is Good Enough for the Father of
Our Country Is Good Enough for You!"**

(Copyright application of this slogan has been filed.)

KOLLEDGE KUT KLOTHING MFG. CO.

New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Dallas, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Denver, Duluth, Jacksonville, Miami, Tampa

Larry, with strange sounds in his throat, turned the page and encountered another one:

**WASHINGTON'S FEET FIND COMFORT
IN SNUG-ARCH OXFORDS!**

Our Beloved First President Heads the List of Successful, Well-Dressed Patriots Who Will Accept No Substitute for America's Smartest, Most Comfortable, Longest-Wearing Shoe—the SNUG-ARCH!

STEP INTO LINE IN THE SNUG-ARCH!

Priced from \$16.95

Larry glanced with growing indignation through other newspapers. He learned that George Washington was keeping cool in Cool-Cut Athletic Underwear; that he was honoring a Neckford Shirt, and a Mallory Foulard Cravat of a dark-blue shade, which the manufacturers stated would hereafter be known as "Washington Blue."

One full page was entirely white except for a little square of type in the center.

**WELCOME TO LIFE—GEORGE WASHINGTON!
PEAVER'S PRODUCTS PLEASE THE PALATE!**

For His First Breakfast in 170 Years
Our Celebrated Visitor From the Past
Enjoyed a Slice of Delicious broiled

PEAVER'S HAM!

WHY WAS HE GIVEN PEAVER'S HAM?

Your Palate Knows!

Where, he wondered, had they obtained that information? Advertisers, he sourly

reflected, were far more resourceful and enterprising than newspaper reporters.

There were other beneficiaries of Washington's miraculous return to life. Prominent among them was Polly Morgan. She had been caught simultaneously, it would seem, by at least twenty cameras in the act of kissing Washington. One of the tabloids carried a photograph of a Miss Rebecca Levine, of the Bronx, seated on her apartment doorstep, revealing delightful legs, weeping because she could not similarly greet the Father of her Country.

Advertisements of the Classic Features Corporation, containing photographs of Polly Morgan and her camera smile, boasted of her speech over the radio; quoted it all in full. Her first film under Classic Features auspices would be entitled "Polly of Lake Shalloon," and would thrill the nation with its authentic glimpse of her life and the heroic part she played in the miracle of Washington's resurrection.

Larry gave his attention to the editorial pages and read vigorous criticisms.

"What a pity," bemoaned the *New York Times*, "that the dignity of the conference between George Washington and Mr. Galloway should have, at the end, been cheapened by Miss Morgan's efforts to gain notoriety for herself and a film company. Her behavior is an irritating commentary upon the femininity of the America in which Washington finds himself. Accustomed as he was to the womanly virtues of reticence and modesty, he must surely have been rudely shocked.

"The episode is to be regretted."

The Sun said:

The action of Miss Polly Morgan, in seizing the microphone at the termination of the Galloway-Washington conference, was mischievous and unfortunate. It came in the nature of a jarring discord after Mr. Galloway's commendable effort to present Washington to all-listening America as the intelligent, straightforward young man he appears to be. In our opinion, this young woman has been grasping opportunity indiscreetly. We are reminded, to our sorrow, that the secondary function of the old-fashioned hairbrush has been permitted to languish.

"Can nothing be done," bitterly inquired the *Evening Post*, "to prevent notoriety,

hunters from exploiting America's latest and greatest hero? Will no one intervene to spare him the ignominy of exploitation by ambitious cinema amateurs and tactless advertisers? Has our noblest American been returned to us for the purpose of testifying to the sterling qualities of popular pickles, pastries and pork? It has come to our attention that an offer of one hundred thousand dollars is to be made to him for his written approval of a certain cigarette.

"Is George Washington to be ashamed of the great nation that he founded? Let us unite to quash all attempts at tampering with the dignity of our beloved hero!"

Larry frowningly examined the editorial page of *The It*. Printed in red and blue, it rang with a rhapsodic acclaim of the hero's return to his people.

McWhorter presently entered with Larry's breakfast.

"The colonel went out horseback riding with Polly before I could nail him, boss. He left word he'd be back in an hour and wanted to see you. I've got to do a story on you now. Is there anything in particular except that for eleven hours you gave a fine imitation of a buzz-saw messing around with knots and heartily breakfasted on Peaver's Palate Pleasing ham and four cups of Oh-So-Good Coffee?"

"I want you to wire, Morrisy," Larry grimly answered, "to have a red-hot editorial written, if he hasn't already done so, condemning all these advertisers who are exploiting Washington. It's disgraceful. Did you see the other editorial pages?"

"No, boss; I've been too busy sorting out telegrams. There are three bushel baskets of them out in my tent for you. Most of them are from nuts. There are twenty operators taking messages for the colonel. Everybody wants to know what the colonel is going to do. Where's he going from here, and when does he start?"

Larry said: "I don't know. I'll have a talk with him."

"It would be a shame if Washington hogged him the way they did Lindbergh. At least forty Congressmen have wired saying he's got to make his first appearance in Washington. Can't you fix it for him to see New York first?"

"I haven't anything to do with it."

"Everybody thinks you have. Every other thing he says is 'I'll have to consult Mr. Galloway.' At first, he wasn't going to say a peep to that gang until he had you with him. They finally wore him down. I think he'll do whatever you tell him to. He's sold solid on the idea that you're safeguarding his interests. You ought to play it for all it's worth, boss."

A firm rapping came on the door.

The reporter opened it.

George Washington, in riding clothes, strode in. His face was flushed. His eyes were sapphire-blue. He was not smiling.

He bowed gravely to the man in pink pyjamas and said: "Good afternoon, Mr. Galloway. I trust you are refreshed."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INTERESTS OF MR. WASHINGTON.

LARRY removed the breakfast tray from his knees to the foot of the bed, pushed newspapers out of his way and stood. He was rosy with embarrassment.

Colonel Washington, occupying a chair, said heartily: "I hope I did not disturb you. It was important for me to have a talk with you, Mr. Galloway."

Larry made confused murmurs.

"You must have been exhausted," the poised young man in riding clothes said kindly. "I have been talking to men from newspapers—reporters, they call themselves—since breakfast time. I am beginning to understand a great many things. May I ask—is our conversation being listened to by millions?"

Larry assured him that it was not.

Washington went on gravely: "Miss Morgan and I had a splendid ride. Of all the novelties I have been introduced to, I am sure that the young lady of to-day will puzzle me the longest. Miss Morgan's aunt is amazing—and delightful, too."

One of his rare smiles illuminated Washington's firm, long mouth.

"I wonder if I may sample these curious white tubes that you call cigarettes? Everybody seems to smoke them. I have declined them all day long. I have been

curious to try one, but I wanted to make the experiment in private."

Larry unsealed and gave him a fresh package of Golden Glows.

Washington's expression became clouded.

"I am constantly disconcerted by these reporters. They are like a pack of eager hounds. They bark questions faster than I can answer them. When I manifest surprise at something new, they laugh. I saw one of them make fire for a pipe with small splinters which he struck against a black substance on the box. They laughed when I attempted to make fire with the splinters by striking them elsewhere than on the side of the box.

"I wish now that I had refused to talk to them until you had awakened. Their questions puzzled me. Their persistence in referring to the prohibition question irritated me. They drew certain statements from me concerning the French that, I realize now, were in poor taste."

Washington had removed a cigarette from the package and placed it gingerly between his lips. He watched the spitting blaze of a safety match, fascinated.

He tasted the smoke, exhaled and puffed again.

"The flavor," he pronounced "is not that of tobacco, but I rather like it. I understand that Americans smoke cigarettes at the rate of billions a year. It seems incredible. Mrs. Islington smoked several after breakfast. She drew the smoke into her lungs and exhaled it through her nostrils. It was amazing. She insisted that I try one, but I declined."

Washington continued to puff at the cigarette. Once he coughed and tears came into his eyes; but Larry did not smile.

"I am anxious to see America, as you say, 'from coast to coast.' But I hate to leave here for the excitement that that will probably mean. And so many strangers! It is hard for me to believe that the only people I know in the world are the ones I have met since last night. Every one has been very kind. Mr. Muller gave me a long talk this noon at luncheon on modern inventions. I wonder, when I leave to see America, if some of these good people can not accompany me."

"Such decisions," Larry assured him, "are entirely yours and will be acted upon."

Washington smiled briefly. "When I leave here, why won't it be possible for these people who have been so kind to come with me? Then I do not feel that I am among total strangers."

"It can easily be arranged," Larry told him. "Whom do you wish in the party?"

Washington answered promptly: "Mr. Muller, Miss Morgan, and Mrs. Islington. All of them, by the way, assure me that I could make no wiser choice of an adviser than you. I want your counsel on all matters. My most trivial utterance is being seized and capitalized by these reporters. Miss Morgan told me that I had made a great mistake in referring to the French and the Indians as I did. I must be more guarded in what I say.

"I conclude that everything I say must be of tremendous interest to America. It is hard for me to see why America should be so interested. And I am amazed by the swiftness with which my words find their way into print. Comments I made this morning I read in the New York newspapers this afternoon; yet New York is more than one hundred miles away.

"My first opinion of this dazzling modern age is that you have conquered time and space. Time, with the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio. Space, with the airplane, the automobile, the railroad and the steamship. I have so far seen all but the railroad and the steamship. What, Mr. Galloway, will America expect of me?"

Larry answered: "What would you really like to do, colonel?"

"I would like to enjoy America. I would like to see these great cities, ride on railroads; have all the modern wonders shown and explained to me. But what will America expect of me?"

"For the present," Larry answered, "America will be content to worship you. Your presence will be demanded in a thousand places at once. I should say that the two birds could be killed with one stone. I mean, America can see you while you are seeing America.

"The cities are already quarreling over you. New York and Washington each in-

sist that you go there first. So does Hartford. Boston wants you. Chicago is determined that you go first to Chicago. New York and Washington quarreled once before when a popular hero returned to America."

"Who was he?" Washington asked.

"Charles Lindbergh."

"What did he do?"

"Lindbergh was the first man to fly an airplane from New York to Paris without stopping."

"Which city received him first?"

"Washington! And New York was furious."

Washington shook his head and murmured: "What a puzzling place this new America is! I do not understand why New York was furious. Washington is the national capital. Why should not returning heroes visit Washington first?"

"Because, long ago, the precedent was established of receiving returning heroes in New York first; largely because New York is the port at which all the great steamships from Europe call. New York, in the past twenty years, has been making more and more of an occasion of a hero's return. Some people think that this holiday spirit is a sign that America is learning to take herself less seriously."

"Your return, from what I've gathered from a glance through to-day's papers, is being celebrated all over the country. Schools, factories, shops, and offices are closed. Every man, woman and child will want to see you. Your opinion will be demanded on every conceivable subject. The most persistent questions will deal with prohibition, tall buildings, and short skirts. America, at least in the East, is more agitated over those three than any others. Your opinion will be wanted on American government and all American institutions."

"But I know nothing of statecraft. I have learned that I only became interested in that after seventeen fifty-five. It seems to me that people are interested only in what happened to me after then. I am—I mean, I was—a farmer, a surveyor, and a soldier."

"People will, none the less, expect and value your opinions."

Washington gave vent to a sigh of exasperation.

"Mr. Galloway, I am not interested in any of these ponderous questions. I am excited by airplanes and electricity and steam engines. I want to see them all. I want to see everything. I don't want to be asked to decide national problems. Let somebody else decide them.

"Mr. Galloway," the young man earnestly continued, "I came up here to tell you that I want to place myself in your hands. I need your advice on hundreds of things, and I trust you. I want you to be near me wherever I go."

Larry murmured that he would be delighted to place himself at his disposal indefinitely.

"I would like to have you decide all these serious, ponderous questions for me."

"I would prefer," was Larry's answer, "to have you decide them for yourself. I will give you my honest opinions on all subjects that puzzle you. My most important duty, as I see it, as your adviser, is to safeguard your tremendous popularity from mistakes, and to see that it is used for some constructive purpose.

"Beyond giving the American people the opportunity for the greatest display of good will and good feeling that has ever come to them," Larry earnestly went on, "it seems to me that you have two serious responsibilities. There are dozens of constructive things you might do; I have boiled down the list to what I honestly believe are the two most important."

"I'll do just what you tell me, Mr. Galloway," Washington said promptly; and Larry found himself wishing that this young man would not take his responsibilities so lightly.

"Have you," he asked, "seen a modern map of the United States?"

He saw that Washington's waning interest had been thoroughly recaptured.

"I was thunderstruck!" he exclaimed.

"Miss Morgan showed me the United States in an atlas. I could not believe that the country has become so thickly populated, and that so many large cities have sprung up."

"In spite of all these modern inven-

tions," Larry continued, "the States are still loosely held together. The New England States are still hated by the Southern States; the East has problems which do not affect the West, and vice versa. It is in your power to knit all sections more closely; to give every part of the country an understanding of the hopes and problems of every other part."

Washington's eyes had become vague again.

"That is, as I see it, your first duty," Larry added.

"And what is my other duty?"

"To overhaul the machinery of government!"

"I do not understand."

Larry explained: "The American people are too busy, too much interested in other things, to care how the country is run. They hire politicians to run it for them. They think they do! As a matter of fact, the politicians decide themselves who will or won't occupy an office. They arrange it all to suit themselves. When election time comes, the people elect the man the politicians want them to elect."

George Washington was beginning to fidget again. He set fire to eight or ten matches in an attempt, eventually successful, to light another Golden Glow. His wandering eyes returned to Larry's face. There was a look of heaviness in them.

Larry briskly continued: "Men who have had no training and no experience to fit them for the jobs become Congressmen, Governors, mayors, judges, ambassadors, even Presidents. Often a candidate's only qualification for office is that he is too lazy or incompetent to do anything else. The people don't care; they aren't interested. They are furious when a crooked office holder is found out. But they soon forget.

"We have even seen the spectacle, colonel, of a man's reflection when he has been proved, on prima facie evidence, guilty of theft, graft, misconduct.

"The people are not sufficiently interested in city, State, Federal government to do anything about it. As a consequence, more and more power has been grasped by the politicians, many of whom are rogues, concerned only with their own schemes."

Colonel Washington concealed a yawn behind his cigarette hand. And Larry tried not to lose his patience. He proceeded:

"The general result is that the people no longer have the power to decide issues vital to them. Politicians make their decisions for them. Or the newspapers behind the politicians distort the truth until the people are convinced that black is white.

"What the country needs," Larry energetically went on, "is a rough shaking up. It must be made aware of these conditions. It must take an active interest in the running of the government; it must face and decide important issues.

"Prohibition must be settled one way or the other. The law must be repealed or enforced. Its greatest effect has been corruption in all branches of government. A disrespect for all law is growing. Your real responsibility to the American people is to awaken them. Once they are awakened—"

"Do you know," Washington murmured, "I believe I am going to like cigarettes."

Larry, to conceal his exasperation, lighted one for himself.

"Well, colonel, what is your opinion?"

"I am tremendously interested in all these problems of State and so on," was the young man's reply. "And I am sure that I could not have selected a more able man to advise and guide me, Mr. Galloway. We must discuss all this later. When will we start on my tour of America, and where shall we go first?"

"The decision on both questions is yours, colonel," Larry said somewhat stiffly.

"Shall we start to-morrow morning, immediately after breakfast?"

"If you wish."

"And where shall we go first? I suppose it would be better, more tactful, to visit Washington first. After all, it was named after me, was it not? Yes," he answered his question. "Washington was named after me, and we ought to go to Washington first. Besides, I am anxious to see Mount Vernon; the changes. But I am even more anxious to see these tall buildings in New York. Miss Morgan has been telling me about them. I cannot

imagine buildings so tall. By all means, let us go to New York first."

"Very well, colonel."

"And let us go in an airplane. I understand there are airplanes large enough to carry a dozen people. Can one of them be sent here to carry us?"

"It can be arranged simply. I will notify the newspapers that we will fly to New York immediately after breakfast to-morrow morning. To-night, I would suggest that you talk on the radio again.

"Newspapers all over America are urging you to do that, not only for the tremendous interest every one has, but to keep people all over the country from gathering in such mobs in the streets. Last night the crowds were out of control in almost every city in the country."

George Washington did not look happy.

"I will talk on the radio if you insist," he said. "You are my adviser, and you know what is best, and I will do just what you want me to do. But Miss Morgan suggested that we spend the evening dancing to the music from that strange cabinet which amazingly reproduces the strains of an orchestra. To me, that cabinet is even more marvelous than the radio, which I do not grasp at all.

"Miss Morgan has most generously offered to teach me the modern dance steps, but, of course—"

He stopped. His gaze had wandered to the window. He was looking out, absorbed by that which he saw on the ground below.

Larry, following his gaze, saw a knot of photographers posing Polly and her aunt. Mrs. Islington was chattering to the photographers; gesticulating with both hands, and the photographers were laughing.

The crowd of men suddenly moved back to their cameras. Mrs. Islington, with her voice and both hands, was urging Polly to do something. Polly, in every line of her body, was resisting the argument.

George Washington was now standing and bending over to look out the window.

Larry, behind him, saw a camera man begin to crank; saw Mrs. Islington fall back a few steps from Polly and then, to his amazement, saw Polly pull down the hem of her pale green afternoon dress; gaze

brightly about her; and turn two perfect cartwheels.

The cameramen yelled and cranked. Aunt Sally laughed. Larry, retaining an image of flying beautiful legs, of fluttering pink silk, quickly glanced at George Washington's profile.

He did not in the least approve of the look he saw on the young man's face.

Another cheer went up. The crowd below had seen Washington at the window. He waved to them, but did not smile.

When the cheering stopped, Aunt Sally called up:

"Come on down, George! The movie man is here with the films he made of us last night. He's going to run them in the library."

George Washington hastened to the door. With hand on knob, he bowed hastily to Larry.

"It is a great relief to know that you are to be my adviser," he got out in one breath. "Until later, Mr. Galloway."

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN WOMEN FIGURE IN.

THE crusader sadly contemplated the closed door. Somehow, he had reached the conclusion that George Washington was not the serious young man history portrayed him to be.

Reviewing that conversation, it struck Larry that Colonel Washington had, at every step, taken pains to avoid responsibility. Had refused to take his mission seriously. Had, without actually saying so, refused to accept any obligation to the nation he had founded.

Larry found himself regretting that George Washington had not returned to life at the age, say, of forty-five; "at the age when he had put frivolity behind him, had settled down to the serious business of organizing and directing a nation.

"What more," he ruefully asked himself, "can I expect of twenty-three?"

He sighed. He himself hadn't been frivolous at twenty-three; hadn't, in fact, been frivolous at any age. Washington was behaving as any normal man of twenty-

three would behave. Considering his youth, he had conducted himself, so far, amazingly.

Larry growled: "It's that damned woman!" And he thought: "She will ruin him, if she gets the chance, just as she's ruining Polly!"

He consulted a notebook in which, in the course of his research reading, he had jotted down many notes. And read:

"Super horseman. Jefferson said he was best of his age—magnificent on horseback. Manner always grave. Fastidiously clean. Big barber and laundry bills. At dinner always drank a pint of Madeira besides rum punch and beer. Very fond of fish. Fish and honey favorite dishes. Went to theater often and to the circus. Rode to hounds. Fond of duck shooting and horse racing. Played cards almost daily. Read only books on agriculture in early manhood. Later, political science, history, and statesmanship. Loved dancing. Once danced for three hours without stopping. Danced High Betty Martin and Leather the Strap. Something of a dandy. Liked fine clothes. Not amusing, but liked amusement."

Larry tossed the notebook aside and entered a tub of cold water. There, his grouch was dissipated. It occurred to him forcibly that Washington, if he remained pliable, would be merely an instrument upon which he would play; a mouthpiece.

Through this light-minded young man, he would awaken America!

He thought, rhapsodically: "I will be to modern America what Washington was to young America!"

His ego complained: "But you will receive none of the credit."

His honesty answered: "But you will be freeing America from corruption, lawlessness, and ignorance!"

In a glowing mood, Larry went downstairs. With shades drawn, the library was in darkness, except for a flickering on a sheet that had been pinned up across the shelves at one end.

A motion picture projector was whirring at the far end. The room was crowded and noisy.

Larry paused in the doorway behind the projector. He saw himself, alone on the veranda, his hair disheveled, his expression

wild as, up the steps, came Washington and Ortola.

Now, Polly, her tattered condition magnified by the lens, determinedly advancing, seizing Washington's hands, kissing him.

The spectators in the library broke into a louder babbling.

Silence again, except for the whirring of the machine.

Then: "Polly, don't you think—"

Voices rose and drowned the rest of it. The voice had been George Washington's. *Polly!*

Larry, his glow somewhat diminished, slipped out of the house and made his way toward the press tents. In one respect, George Washington was as modern as a university undergraduate. It struck Larry that the colonel and Polly Morgan must have covered an amazing amount of ground on that horseback ride.

Reporters quickly surrounded him. Brown, at one elbow, growled:

"You haven't been letting much grass grow under your feet, have you, Galloway?"

Larry said: "I don't get you."

"You've got things pretty well sewed up, haven't you?"

Larry, beginning to protest innocence, was interrupted by a snarling snort of "Oh, hell; every damned question we've asked him since he came down from your room he's referred to you. 'Ask Mr. Galloway!' Great guns, how sick I'm getting of asking Mr. Galloway. Well, what's the lowdown—or is it exclusive to *The It*?"

"Colonel Washington," Larry answered, "has asked me to be his adviser. Hereafter, most statements from him will come through me. You might as well get used to it."

"Are you going with him on his tour?"

"I am."

"What did you talk about up there?"

"A great many things. You fellows may as well know he is sore at the way you laugh at his mistakes and the way you try to bully him into making injurious statements."

"All we get from now on, I suppose, is pap."

"You'll get straight truth, but you won't

be given the chance to quote him injuriously. Paste that in your hats."

"All right," growled Riley of the *News*. "We're going to be so good we'll each earn a little gold cross. Will you spill something? What happened up in that room?"

Larry smiled grimly. "The colonel came to me for straight facts about America. He was tremendously interested."

"What did he say about prohibition?"

"He asked dozens of questions about it, but he isn't going to say a word until he's looked things over. That's flat. He asked dozens more questions about city, State, and Federal government. He is, of course, very much interested in politics."

"He wasn't when he talked to us!"

"Well, he was when he talked to me. He is going to make a thorough study of all branches of government from one end of the country to the other. American progress and American politics are the two subjects which interest him most."

"When does he leave?"

"To-morrow morning, immediately after breakfast."

"The hell he does! Why didn't you say so?"

"Why didn't you ask me? I'm being interviewed," Larry answered and laughed. He heard a half dozen men curse him.

"Where does he go?"

"New York."

"Wow! Not Washington?"

"He wanted to see New York first; Washington next. He'll go by plane. I'm going to order it now."

"Who'll make up the party?"

"Miss Morgan, Mrs. Islington—"

"Say! Where does that dame get off to go horning in as if—"

"Shut up!" snapped a dozen voices.

"—and Paul Muller."

"And yourself."

"That's all."

"It's one too many, if you ask me!" said a young news-getter.

"Why the mob?" asked Brown.

"The colonel's wishes. In his own words: 'I am alone in this new world among strangers. My only friends are the ones I have made since last night. I want them to go wherever I go!'"

"Will he drag that mob with him everywhere?"

"He will."

"Hot dog, what a joy ride!"

Larry attempted to restore the craft of dignity to an even keel.

"Paul Muller used to be a university instructor," he said. "The colonel likes the simple, understandable way he explains things. Miss Morgan is going as her father's representative—"

"And to cop off a million dollars' worth of publicity!"

This Larry ignored. "Mrs. Islington is going as Miss Morgan's chaperon."

A man broke in with: "Who is this mysterious Gore woman?"

"I don't know anything about her except that she is the wife of a vivisectionist who assisted Professor Morgan."

"Where is Gore?"

"I don't know."

"Where's he from?"

"I don't know anything about him. I never met him. His work in connection with Professor Morgan's experiments was kept secret from every one. He cleared out when the experiment was finished."

"Washington has a crush on the Morgan girl, hasn't he?"

"Certainly not!" Larry snapped.

"Aw, how do you get that way? You've got one on her yourself!"

Larry retorted angrily: "You've got a big story, haven't you? Why not leave silliness out for a change?"

"I've been reading up on Washington as a young man," a reporter said. "He's fallen for this Morgan wren like the pro-

verbial ton of bricks. It may be silly, but it's news."

Larry insisted: "If he falls in love with Miss Morgan, I'll know all about it; I'll tell you."

A chorus of jeers apprized him that the reporters' opinion of him was unchanged. They would probably remain suspicious, skeptical, and sore until the bitter end.

"The Islington dame is making a harder play for him than the Morgan girl," said one of them. "She razzes him and he eats it up."

"Washington never understood women," a reporter from the *Chicago Tribune* put in seriously. "He was turned down by one of them after another. His technique must have been awful. If he doesn't watch his step, Sally Islington or Polly Morgan will make a sap out of him. I agree with Galloway on that angle. If we play up this girl stuff he's going to get sore. You saw how riled he got this morning when we began whipsawing him on prohibition. My dope is to lay off the girl stuff."

Larry quickly added:

"That is sound dope. Washington will begin paying attention to the papers pretty soon, and if you make a fool of him, he'll close down on all of you."

The reporters drifted off to file their stories, and Larry made his way to the telephone tent, where booths had been installed. The switchboard operator informed him that, of the hundreds of calls that had been coming in for him since early morning, at least every third one had originated in the office of Groton Wafer, chairman of the New York reception committee.

In next week's, the concluding installment, there will be revealed the machinations of the arch-villain of history, and you will have, bared before you, the man Washington.



IT'S A LIE !

By GORDON STILES

Our Complete Novelette next week carries its hero into such surprising situations that he keeps constantly telling himself that what's happening to him can't be true. Plenty of action and real thrills.



The End of Apollo

By **BENNETT LADD**

LOOK out, Apollo, I'm comin' through yuh!"

"Apollo" Ferris shuddered to have that ill-favored name flung in his face, and, steeling himself grimly, he dived at the galloping legs of the fast moving ball carrier. He felt a rising knee jolt his shoulder as both his hands clutched at the legs which seemed to be all kicking feet, then mud cleats scraped his head. Instinctively he ducked to protect the face which had won him the nickname, and he had the sinking sensation of feeling the legs slip from his grasp.

Apollo bumped to the ground, rolled over, and saw a desperate tackle bring the carrier down eight yards farther on. Another first down! And all his fault. He had that man right in his grasp.

He trotted back to his position off and behind Merrick, the end. That bulky individual gave him a leering grin.

"For the love of Mike, Apollo, snap into it." This from Habisch, a more fighting captain than whom never manned a team. At left half he was a wild runner all opponents feared, a deadly tackler, and in the midst of every play.

For the rest of the game Steve Ferris plugged doggedly on, but his spirit wasn't in it. It worried him that the Lakeville eleven knew that dreaded nickname. He wondered how they had got it.

"18-54—" broke suddenly through his thoughts, and he realized barely in time that Gorman was calling him over tackle. He dashed forward with determination, gripped the ball as it was shoved in the pit of his stomach, and threw all his energy into a race after his interference. He saw them divide, saw Habisch crash the end toward the inside, and felt the tackler reaching for him.

Swiftly he slanted outward; Gilligan, Lakeville's half, rushed into him, crying: "Stop, Apollo, I've got you."

Ferris gritted his teeth as he saw the burly Gilligan lunge for a tackle; then came the cry from behind, the pursuing tackle: "Stop, Apollo, or he'll mess you up!"

Too late Steve shook off those voices. The earth crashed into him, and the iron arms of Gilligan gripped his knees. And so went the rest of the game for Ferris. This was his big chance in a big game; and

he fought with all that was in him, but the taunts of: "Look out, Apollo, we'll ruin your face," checked every movement.

And Butcher Merrick, at end, leered every time he tumbled heavily, sneered at every runner he let slip through. The last whistle was merciful, but he knew another ordeal was in store for him.

"Listen you, Apollo," began Coach Flanagan in no gentle tones, "are you so damned careless about your chances on the team that you throw away games? We had those bozos beat good to-day, and you pull a cork leg. Every time a man touched you, you dropped, and you went up to their runners like you wanted to play tag. Believe me, you gotta do more'n tag them cutthroats to bring 'em down, savvy? You gotta hit 'em.

"You don't savvy that, do you, Apollo? You don't believe in the old battle cry of hittin' 'em low, hard, and often. Scared of your priceless mug, eh? That's what everybody told me, but I thought I'd give you a chance. This is my first year as coach here, and I'm aimin' to make a record, see? I ain't handled a losin' team yet; and this is my first chance in the big leagues, and I'm not changing my record now.

"Four games this year, and no defeats so far. Now we drop a 7 to 7 tie to those Lakeville yaps, when we should 'a' ate 'em up. Drop it, that's what we did, for we was picked and groomed to win. Now look you: Cap'n Habisch and a coupla others tell me you came here with a pretty good prep school record, and you didn't do so bad on the freshman team. But your last two years you hung on the scrubs when you should 'a' been on the varsity. They say they gave you a few chances, but you didn't play up—not exactly yeller, understand—just scared of that mug o' yourn.

"Now look, Apollo: I seen you wasn't knockin' 'em cold while you was on the scrubs. But I also seen you had somethin' in you. You're a fast bozo; you gotta good build, I'll hand you that; and you know how to handle yourself. So when Bill Scraggin was out to-day I give you a chance in one of Holwood's biggest games. And you muffed it, you did!

"Now if you want to as much as see a field from the inside these last four games—and they're the last four games of your college career—you gotta forget that face. Forget it, Apollo, forget it!"

Standing before the mirror that night, dressing for the dance of Holwood and Lakeville, Steve Ferris regarded the face which was the cause of his misfortune. He gritted his teeth and watched the determined look appear on his priceless physiognomy.

He smiled ruefully and murmured: "I want to make the team, but—I almost believe—the preservation of my looks is worth the sacrifice. After all, I'm out of college for the rest of my life when I graduate, and I don't know if a football letter will sell the bonds that my face might. And I don't believe Germaine would be so anxious to be Mrs. Stephen Barrister Ferris if I had a—broken nose, for instance."

With some return of complacency he went down to dinner. His fraternity brothers were none too cordial. Steve was their only representative on the football team. True, Conroy was doing fairly well on the scrubs, but nothing much was expected of him. Ted Bronson was playing a good game at end on the freshman team, and he was bid up. But Steve was the only man they depended on this year for football.

The Alpha Alpha Gammas had gone in rather heavily for literary and social men in the past few years; but last year had seen the graduation of a good flock. Meredith Cullingsby, their social lion, had transferred to Yale. Jock Tolwell, the brilliant editor of the *Holwood Rage*, had been expelled when that organ was barred from the mails and discontinued publication. Now the Alpha Alpha Gammas were in a fine plight for prominent men, and one Stephen Ferris was letting them down most dreadfully because of his dream-producing profile.

Scowls met Steve's pleasantries, and he felt that the boys were using him rather badly. Altogether he wasn't feeling too happy at the dance.

At last he was alone with Germaine Rivers. Now he turned the full potency of

his face on her. She smiled and said, a trifle sadly: "Steve, you didn't do as well as I expected of you to-day."

"Oh, Germaine," he cried, "I did my very best. Gosh, you've no idea how hard I fought! I wanted so much to do well for you. Now—I'm frightfully disappointed."

"Steve, I didn't mean to hurt you. But it was your chance; and—the fellows say it's because—because you—"

"Yes, I know." Steve hung his head. "But, gosh, it's you that I think about, and I don't want to get all battered up for you. Don't you understand?" he cried vehemently. "It's because I love you so, I fear of doing anything that 'll make me lose favor in your eyes."

The Grecian nose dilated with emotion, and the dreamy eyes, shadowed by extraordinary lashes, turned gradually on her, sending little chills down her spine.

"Steve," she whispered, "you are a good-looking devil. And I love you."

Meaning glances were cast at Steve by the members of the Lakeville team, who felt they had won a moral victory in holding Holwood to a tie.

"Hello, Apollo," called big Gilligan across the floor.

But Ferris lifted his noble head haughtily; and Gilligan watched Steve cut in, and noted how the girl he was dancing with gloated over possessing him.

"Well, I'm damned!" he muttered.

A sneering voice broke in: "Apollo is there with the ladies, anyway."

It was Butcher Merrick, Holwood's end.

"Yeh, Butcher," answered Gilligan, with scorn. "What can you tell the ladies to call him so he'll be queered with them?"

Butcher replied sullenly: "You got no kick because I gave you the low-down on his name. It helped you plenty."

"Yeah? Well, how did it help you, Butcher?"

Butcher did not answer, but soon Gilligan saw him trailing Germaine Rivers. Again Gilligan saw Butcher leading her outside. A little later Gilligan saw Germaine walk rapidly into the room, looking furious, with Butcher strolling self-consciously behind her.

"So that's his game," laughed the Lakeville star.

II.

NEXT week at scrimmage Steve entered cheerfully into practice despite the slight coolness of his teammates, who seemed to resent his poor playing, to which they attributed the tie game. On Tuesday Bill Scraggin, recovered, returned to his place at right half, and Ferris was lined up with the scrubs.

First time he carried the ball round Merrick's end Butcher jeered at him:

"Watch out, Apollo, I'm going to ruin your map!"

Steve started, and at that moment Merrick threw him savagely, his face grinning in the dirt. When he rolled over, a streak of dirt across his chin and lips, Merrick leered: "Another like that, and Miss Germaine won't recognize her handsome hero."

Smack! Ferris's fist struck Butcher full in the mouth. Merrick started for him. Steve warded off a vicious lunge, ducked under a short blow, uppercut him to the chin, and they clinched.

Rough hands separated them, and Coach Flanagan ran up, cursing prodigiously. "Get off this field, you Apollo." And followed this remark by many others of doubtful decency.

Steve undressed moodily.

"Now I've done it," he thought.

But another thought ran in his mind. Was it Butcher Merrick that told the Lakeville bunch about his name and his fear of marring his features? Could he have done that caddish trick? And why? Germaine might explain it. He would certainly ask her.

That night he called her up.

"May I see you to-night?" he asked gravely.

"I'm rather busy," she replied, somewhat coolly, he thought.

"This is urgent, Germaine."

"Well—you may come over for a little while."

Immediately on his arrival he asked her had Merrick ever bothered her. She was non-committal. Steve was slightly puz-

zled by her evasive answers, and then she inquired:

"How are things going at practice?"

It was his turn to grow evasive. "Oh, so so," he replied.

"Steve," she said earnestly, "I did want you to make the team. Your last year, and you've so nearly made it three years. I don't—like the fellows to say—what they do about you."

Steve hung his head, and the fine curve of it was bathed in the moonlight before her very eyes. Then slowly he lifted the Grecian nose, the pale face, in that gorgeous moon, with its shadowy, dreamy eyes, now melancholy, engulfed her. A delicious little thrill trickled down her spine.

"You are a handsome devil," she said softly—and a little later: "And I love you."

That night Steve smiled at his image in the mirror, and told himself: "I would like to make the team. I would like to star just once for Germaine."

Then her face supplanted his own in the glass, and he thought no more of the team for awhile.

As he walked on the field next day Butcher strode belligerently up to him. The other fellows stopped talking and watched the two.

"I'm going to get you for yesterday, Apollo." Butcher spat out the last word.

"There's no time like the present," Ferris replied quietly.

"No?" sneered Butcher. "You got nothing to lose, but I have. I'm getting you after the season's over, and then you won't be such a pretty boy."

"I'll be ready any time you say the word, and you still won't be a pretty boy, no matter what happens."

"Yeah? Nor a yeller one, neither."

"No? But you might be a sneaky one."

"What d'yah mean?" growled Butcher.

"Think it over." And Ferris sauntered off.

"Say, Apollo," called Flanagan, "you can keep the bench down to-day. Brown will take your place."

Brown was a third-team right half, a conscientious, mediocre player. Ferris sat gloomily on the bench during the whole

practice period. His only consolation were those sweet words that lingered with him from the night before: "You are a handsome devil."

III.

Busy days followed whipping the team into shape for its two principal battles, mainly the last game of the season with State. State and Holwood had a twenty-nine-year-rivalry, which had been split evenly with fourteen games won each, and one game tied. They were planning elaborate celebration for the thirtieth anniversary of the bitter contests, and the winning team would naturally assume some ascendancy by reason of one game more to its credit out of the total played.

Chances looked unfavorable, as State had gone undefeated two seasons, having beaten Holwood the past two years in spite of the great Habisch, and were primed to complete a record of three years without a defeat, at the expense of their ancient rival.

Holwood, on the other hand, were determined to rebuild their once powerful machine to its former glory, and complete their first year under Flanagan without a defeat. To finish off the season by breaking State's winning streak, and starting one of their own was no mean ambition, but steady progress was discernible under Flanagan, and their tie with Lakeville was the only discredit, they having won all other games.

Ferris found himself, for the first time in three years on the team, frequently shifted to the third team to do battle with the fourth, which consisted of a motley assortment of chaps utterly unfit for good football. Several less auspicious occasions found him sitting rather moodily on the bench.

When he did join with the scrubs his play was unmarked by any brilliance, and he was always agitated by the cries of the first string men: "I've got you, Apollo."

They had taken up Merrick's trick of taunting him. There was no reason for their animosity that Ferris could see. Certainly he had been friendly enough with the men during his years at college.

But now he felt their hostility, and it

worried him, hurt his playing. Once in awhile he fought harder under their taunts, but when he failed he consoled himself with thoughts of Germaine and her: "You are a handsome devil."

Steve was cheerful by nature, and attached no great importance to his football defections. He wanted to make the team, but, confound it, he was particular about his face, too. And why not?

Germaine Rivers was practically engaged to him, and she was the catch of the school, and well did young Ferris realize it. Even Habisch had made no impression on her; the most brilliant stars of visiting teams went utterly flat with her; and the persistence of Butcher Merrick was wasted.

He might have been quicker to regret his team mates' disfavor at another time, but with dreams of Germaine—well, what if he didn't make the team? She'd love him anyway: it was his face that won her; and so might it be selling bonds after college.

He played hard enough, but there was a certain restraint.

"I'm not taking any wild chances," he said to himself when he let a man through or failed to break through on a run.

"Aw, you yellow Apollo, go have yer picture taken." He heard this sneer one day, and it hurt.

Then he noticed some strangeness among his companions off the field. Good Heaven! Could they be thinking he was really yellow? A cold chill seized him.

"I *am* careful of myself," he reflected, "but I'll swear I'm not yellow."

He confided in one of his most intimate fraternity brothers.

"Tell me, Dick," he asked, "what's wrong with all the fellows? They give me a fishy stare lately. It can't be because I didn't make the team. I didn't make it the last two years either; and a lot of other fellows don't make it. Why this sneering from the first team men, and these odd looks from you chaps?"

Dick was strangely evasive. He left a deeply concerned Steve to wander off forlornly to his room.

But Dick left deeply concerned also. He sought several other Alpha Alpha Gammas.

"Gee, fellows," he said, "I couldn't tell Steve the word has passed around that he's yellow. I don't believe he is myself. But they think that Butcher Merrick's got him scared. They say that Butcher's threats unnerved him."

"I don't know," cut in Bud Conroy, second team tackle. "The varsity is riding him pretty hard on this Apollo gag. I've seen him lay down. I never believed Steve was yellow myself. But he surely is careful about that mug of his."

"And he is a handsome brute," enviously sighed Reefer.

"But that's his ruin, and it doesn't help the house to have this yellow talk going around. Something ought to be done."

"Well," said Reefer, "it's too late to do anything now. The season is over."

"There is the State game yet," put in Dick, rather hopelessly.

"Hell," grunted Bud Conroy, "you don't think the coach'd put him in that, do you? Why, Brown is beating him out for right half on the scrubs."

"If he'd only make a last minute spurt it'd remove the stigma of yellow. He's got to do something."

"I've got one hope," slyly said Reefer.

"What is it?" several asked eagerly.

Reefer carefully outlined his plan.

"Great," some cried when he finished.

"We can try it anyway."

"It might do some good," gloomily added Conroy.

Next night found the group utterly dejected.

"She wouldn't do it, eh?"

"Wouldn't help us, huh?"

"Sure she wouldn't consider it?" asked Reefer, more disappointed than any.

"Absolutely not."

And so it stood until the final afternoon before the game, and so it might have remained at the conclusion of the season, but for the indiscreet jubilation of Butcher Merrick.

He left the field after that final practice seeing Apollo Ferris assigned to the third team for the bench to-morrow, which meant no earthly chance for the game. Habisch and Scraggin both were playing at their regular positions. Yelverton at his regular

half back position on the second team, with Brown in Steve's accustomed place.

The campus was on edge for the game. Already old grads were coming in, and crowds of pretty young girls were expected for the dance following. Gay placards hung all over the buildings and the grounds, with "Beat State" in large letters. Never was a school more primed for victory.

Butcher had the final touch of pleasure in seeing Steve Ferris wander off alone, a disconsolate figure, for Steve now felt the depth of his isolation—this new hostility of his teammates weighed heavily on him.

Merrick saw Germaine entering the drug store. He hurried in after her.

Over sodas he waxed enthusiastic, but she remained unresponsive. Nettled at her coldness, he said spitefully: "Your hero left on his last day with tail dragging. I don't see where you rate so high displaying a yellow shirker like Apollo."

"Don't you call Steve yellow," she flared.

"Why not?" he leered. "Everybody else does."

"What do you mean?"

"What would I mean—that he's gutless, afraid of his 'bootiful' face, and all you got to do is say 'Look out, Apollo,' and he slinks off like a beaten cur. Sure he's yellow. The coach knows it, and put him on the third for to-morrow, so he's got no chance of spoiling the game."

Germaine paled. She said, very low: "So that's what the men meant by their subtle remarks and funny looks."

"Of course, that's what they meant," laughed Merrick. "Everybody's wise to him. And they got him where he belongs to-morrow—on the bench."

"It seems that you are very happy about it," said Germaine, thinking over something.

He leaned closer. "Why shouldn't I be? Now that you know what sort of a skunk your Apollo is, I mightn't look so bad to you."

Her answer was to leave the store.

That night, when Steve came over, his usual blithesomeness was missing. Germaine didn't wait for him to speak.

"You are relegated to the third team to-morrow, aren't you?" she began.

"Yes. Who told you?"

"Butcher Merrick."

"He would," Ferris replied with sudden vehemence.

"He told me why, too," she went on in a low voice, filled with emotion.

"He did that, too?"

"Yes. He said you were"—she paused for effect—"yellow."

"What!" Steve leaped to his feet. "That's a lie."

"He said every one knew it."

Steve hung his head. "So that's what's the matter with all the fellows," he muttered.

"Yes," she retorted. "And what are you going to do about it?"

"What can I do?" he groaned.

"What can you do? You can show some spirit. You can make the coach let you get in that game to-morrow."

"Oh, God," he moaned, "it's awful."

"It's awful the way you've allowed yourself to be a coward; to make a laughing stock of me; because you're afraid—afraid of your beauteous face."

"Germaine," he implored.

She turned from him. "Oh, I'm so ashamed. I could—die. I never thought it of you, Steve Ferris. To be ridiculed as a cheap Apollo. I wanted you to be a man, and you're a—you're a—Handsome Harold."

"Germaine," he cried, "you mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. Do you think I want to be tied to a—an Apollo, sneered at by the whole campus as yellow? What of your wonderful looks! Forget them for once, and be a man."

Ferris mumbled incoherently.

She stood adamant. "Leave me, Apollo," she said.

Steve stumbled toward his room. Never could he have imagined that fiery, scornful little girl, lifting her tear-stained face to the sky, weeping and murmuring: "Forgive me. If he only forgives me."

IV.

NEXT afternoon when the whistle sounded Steve watched from the side lines,

a glowering figure wrapped in a blanket. The stands were packed to overflowing: it was a record crowd, and a record of noise.

Long before the teams trotted on the field the stands had been filled with yells and cries, and as the time for the game approached these random outbursts became concentrated into rival songs, and threats.

Both hands had blared forth to the heavens their spirited airs, and the frenzied cheer leaders cavorted in a most unseemly fashion before their respective crowds, exhorting them through megaphones to yet greater efforts of encouragement for the boys.

All this had been a dull din in the ears of Steven Ferris. It was bitter. He saw the field solemnly, and he saw no more.

Holwood received, and the State players rushed down on them like savages. There was a sharp mêlée, and a Holwood back was thrown. The ball went into play on the twenty-six yard line.

Habisch shot around end: he cleared the line of scrimmage and looked to be going well. A cheer started up in the Holwood stands.

An orange shirt flashed suddenly at his heels, and he took a nasty tumble. It was a hard, clean tackle. The score board showed two yards gain. He had run wide.

Habisch dropped back to kick. On a fake play, Cardigan, the full back, plunged inside of tackle. A scuffle of blue and orange jerseys and the pile stilled. The score board showed a two yard gain.

Cardigan, the big full, dropped back to kick. The orange jerseys of State rushed in on him, but he got it clear, forty yards down the field, to the waiting arms of Nagle, the State quarter.

Merrick was right on him, but he flashed by, and started zigzagging up the field. A cheer started from the State stands.

Terry, left end, made a long dive for him, but he shifted, pulled free, and then Habisch was on him and he dropped his length. The ball went into play on State's thirty-five yard line.

Nagle had come back five yards. State failed to make a first down, and they kicked. The end of the quarter found both teams in relatively the same position, with neither able to make material gains.

Habisch was used very badly. It was apparent State pointed for him, and he was absorbing brutal punishment.

In the second period State opened up on their own forty yard line with a determined push. After two attempts at the line which netted them five yards, on a kick formation, Nagle slipped around end for first down. A mighty cheer arose from the State stands, accompanied by heavy poundings on the bass drum.

Down the field marched the team, until, under the frantic exhortations of Habisch, Holwood rallied on their ten yard line, and held for downs. However, they were unable to gain, and Cardigan kicked.

Again State charged down to the shadow of the goal post, and again Holwood desperately fought off a score. So the quarter progressed, State continually threatening the goal, and Holwood gallantly defending it.

Once Holwood was given a hope when Habisch, from his own eight yard line, on the third down with seven yards to go, circled the end on a kick formation, and ran twelve yards before he was dropped. The tackling then was so severe that he was incapacitated for the next few plays, and Holwood was unable to follow up the advantage.

Then, toward the end of the half, State carried the ball to the two yard line before they were held. They rushed through at Cardigan like a pack of wolves when he received the pass from behind his goal. The punt fell short, Nagle scrambling for it on the twenty-eight yard line.

One first down was made. Three yards were lacking for the second, when Nagle sneaked around end, stopped suddenly, and darted to a low pass across the other side of the field.

It was entirely unexpected, and the end snatched it on the ten yard line right on the edge of the field, and dashed down the sideline with no one in front of him. Merrick was tumbled off by two protectors.

It was Habisch who, coming in diagonally, threw him outside on the two yard line. But it was too late then. On the third down the ball went over. A perfect goal was kicked.

The roar from the State side was deafening. Shortly after the half ended. From the Holwood stands came the usual songs and yells of encouragement.

The rooters were fearful, yet by no means downhearted. They had faith, and chanted it fiercely during the rest period.

It was among the players that hopelessness was felt. They were all being used up by the viciousness of the State men. It was a killing pace.

Scraggin's bad shoulder was bothering him so much it was impossible for him to go back in. Habisch was red, black, and blue, and in no condition to play another minute. It was a dispirited team that listened to Coach Flanagan's frenzied appeals, instructions, and curses.

As the coach paused, for lack of words, up stepped Apollo Ferris, a strange, grim Apollo, who said in a peculiar voice: "I don't guess you have a very good opinion of my playing coach—"

Flanagan interrupted harshly: "I've got no time to listen to handsome heroes now," and started to turn away.

Ferris grabbed his arm, and said, in a low, imperious voice, looking at the coach in a manner that made him pause: "You're going to listen to me now, see? I want to get in this game. This is the last game I'll ever have a chance to play in, and I'm going to justify myself as regards certain remarks that have been made about me." He glanced around the group of silent, solemn men, allowing his gaze to rest meaningly on Merrick, which worthy leered in his characteristic way.

The coach turned from Ferris without answering, and gave the team final admonitions, half encouragement, half threats. They stalked out grimly, Yelverton in Scraggin's place, who was in the hands of the surgeon.

Ferris noticed this and remained silent; he was determined to go in, and he bided his time.

State received and Kilhardt, their half, who was responsible for most of the long gains, raced back to his thirty-five yard line before he was thrown by Yelverton. At once State began its vigorous, dashing tactics, which Holwood could not repulse.

Yelverton was amply filling Scraggin's place at left half, and Gorman and Cardigan fought hard, both sturdy men and resolute. Habisch was playing a valiant game, but it was the last struggle of the defeated. The repeated pointed onslaughts of those orange jacketed demons were wearing him down.

On his attempts with the ball they poured over him in spite of splendid interference, and all his speed and skill could not elude those fierce grapplers. Gorman and Cardigan fared little better, but Holwood was spared undue punishment from tackling. It was State that carried the game into enemy territory, and with a vengeance.

In a sort of blood lust they tore into the blue with brutal frenzy. Down, down, down the field they rushed the ball, Nagle skirting the ends, and Kilhardt ripping the line and tackles to shreds. They were irresistible.

Continual cheers soared from their stands, and a heavy silence hung over the Holwood side, which even the half-hearted efforts of the cheer leaders couldn't lift. They saw their hero brought violently down at his few feeble efforts, and they watched the bloodthirsty hordes rush over him.

But it was the men on the side lines who realized the despair of those eleven fighting players, borne down in a losing battle. Twice Ferris started to speak to the coach, but that hard face checked him.

A cheer of relief went up from Holwood when their warriors turned back the tide once again, this time on the five-yard line. Cardigan fell back to kick, and a short pass to Gorman sent him spinning through tackle. He was brought down heavily after two yards.

Again Cardigan fell back, standing on his goal line. Again a short pass, and Habisch romped off end. He eluded the intruding end, the tackle was pinned in by a desperate interference, and Habisch ran five yards before the fullback plunged at him.

Habisch pulled aside and picked up his stride as the half charged into him; this time he struggled at his old shift and half freed those clutching hands, when Kilhardt,

coming in diagonally, struck him in that off-balance position as he shook off the halfback, but before he regained his stride. Down he went, with the halfback leaping in from behind. First down!

A mighty roar ascended. And then all was hushed—Habisch remained on the ground. A minute later he limped from the field on the arms of two men, while a deafening cheer, partly answered from the opposing side, filled the air.

"Go in, Brown," growled Flanagan, "and fight, that's all, fight."

Ferris started up at the coach. "I wanted that chance," he cried.

"Go to hell!" snarled Flanagan.

"Listen, you," warned Ferris, "I'm getting in this game or you'll regret it, do you hear?"

"Shut up, or I'll have you thrown off!"

"Like hell you will! You're losing, aren't you, you rummy? Can you be any worse off by giving me a chance?"

Flanagan's answer was a groan. Brown's first attempt to carry the ball ended in a two-yard loss. It was the third down and five precious yards had been earned by Gorman and Yelverton, following Habisch's costly first down. Taking a third down chance on Brown he had reeled into two tacklers who gave him a nasty spill.

"There's your choice," gloated Ferris.

Cardigan fell back to kick. An inrushing guard bowled over Brown, who lost his head, and Cardigan's kick fell short. The agile Nagle grabbed it, and squirmed two yards.

Down the field tore the orange jerseys, pushing back the defenders ruthlessly. One first down. Another first down. Kilhardt flashed past Brown and was brought down by Gorman on the eleven-yard line.

"Your choice," said Ferris.

Flanagan snarled.

Three yards the line gave. Four yards the line gave. Again they surged forward—there was a wild scramble, both sides shrieked.

"Great Heaven!" shouted Flanagan. "They fumbled, and we've got the ball on the two-yard line."

Ferris grabbed him. "See here, I'm going in now. You nor all hell can't stop me.

I'm going to win this game and prove what's been said about me was lies." He ripped off his sweater.

The coach was trying to speak.

"You shut up," Ferris warned him with dangerously flashing eyes, "I'm going in if I knock you out first." And he raced across the field.

The teams were already lined up and signals coming when the umpire blew his horn for a substitute. The tired blues relaxed.

"Ferris for Brown," called Steve, and ran into his men.

Steve bent down in position, conscious of the hostility. He thought he heard a murmur, but he paid no heed. Gorman sent himself around the opposite end, a risky play two yards from the goal, but it was worth a try. Ferris ran alongside him: saw the tackle straining to get through, saw the end fighting through Yelverton and Cardigan, saw Gorman running outward with a good chance of clearing them both, saw the halfback rushing it, and picked him for his man.

He dived and clipped the man cleanly at the knees. Gorman cleared the end, dodged in on the fullback, and went out his length when Kilhardt hit him. It was a five-yard gain.

"Call time out," Steve directed Gorman. It was his first chance to speak after coming in, and Gorman thought it coach's orders. He complied.

"Listen, you men," Ferris told them, "I made the coach let me come in and the time out is my own idea. I've heard what you men have been saying about me and I'm here to prove that you are a bunch of liars. I'm not yellow and never was.

"I admit I was particular about not getting scarred up; but that's over now. See, I don't give a damn what happens. I came in here to fight till every one of you will shout from the housetops that I'm a playing fool. Get it! Now, we're going to win this game. I'm going to win it, if you men will fight half as hard to show you're not yellow as I mean to show you I'm not. Are you with me for a chance?"

Grunts of approval answered, and Gorman said: "Yes, I saw you clip that man in your first play."

"All right, and I'm doing that every play. Give me the ball next time around the same end, and if I gain give it to me every time I ask for it as long as I gain."

They went back in with mixed emotions. Gorman called him, and Steve tore around that end for eight yards and five down. The stands' yells reached the men. They took heart.

"Come on, men," sang Ferris, "we'll tear these bozos to pieces."

He took it again, the same end, for five yards, and the stands went crazy. The players roused their tired bodies, their flagging spirits, and went in eagerly.

Again and again Steve carried the ball. Occasionally Gorman or Cardigan or Yelverton relieved him. But it was Ferris who brought the ball from his own seven-yard line to the opposing seven-yard line in one of the most brilliant marches ever witnessed on the field. His number, 33, flashed for a moment above the scrambling jerseys, plunged forward, and Holwood had gained.

He licked up the ground, and his spirit rallied every man to exert himself to hitherto unknown limits. State fell back before him. They tried their pointing tactics on him in vain. He tore through their massed tacklers, shook free of the vicious lungers, and always managed to fall clear of their piles.

It was first down on the seven-yard line, the nearest Holwood had been to the opposing goal the whole game. The stands' uproar was deafening. The men could hardly hear the signals.

Ferris flashed to the right and State followed, but he did not have the ball. Gorman scurried for three yards before he was brought down. Again Ferris flashed to the right: they brought him down on the two-yard line.

The mighty orange wall braced for the attack. A strange formation puzzled the defenders. Cardigan, Yelverton, and Gorman formed in a triangle, with Ferris to the right near the line. It looked like a trick pass.

They spread for it. Then a low, short pass, and Ferris, scooping it up, dived

across the huddled figures. He landed, rolling, in a mass of figures, and when the veritable mountain that stopped him was removed, the ball was six inches over the line.

Cardigan missed the goal, the players in their excitement relaxing for a moment against the untiring State.

"Never mind one point," counseled Ferris. "We'll win by a touchdown."

Holwood kicked off to State and the enthusiastic tacklers nailed Kilhardt on the twenty-five-yard line. Quarter ended there. But before it ended Steve noticed Merrick speaking to one of the State men. Gorman saw him, too.

"You watch what these State men do now, and you'll see what Merrick said to that fellow," Ferris told Gorman.

They both noticed that orange man talking to others.

On the next play after the rest Kilhardt charged off end, and, shaking off clinging hands, he called to Ferris, rushing into him: "You look out, Apollo, I'm coming to mash your beak."

"Come ahead," cried Steve, and threw himself at the flying feet.

Kilhardt gave an awkward kick, and Steve twisted his ankle as he brought him down heavily. Kilhardt arose slowly.

Half the Holwood team witnessed this, and then there was no stopping them. They got their touchdown, and Holwood finished their first year of no defeats with a thirteen to seven victory.

Gorman passed around the word about Merrick, and he never renewed his challenge to Steve. Nor was the name Apollo ever used again.

At the dance that night when Steve found Germaine, his face was still in order, but he looked a little constrained.

"Oh, Steve, you know now why I said that, don't you? I did so want you to show what I knew you could do, just to silence those dirty remarks."

Steve seemed to understand, for he was a long time missing from the dance, and when he returned with Germaine, his face was handsomer than ever, flushed with a new light.



Conrad the Saxon

By **JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE**

Author of "Captain Will-o'-the-Wisp," "What Price the World," etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SAXON HEART.

"ALFRED," responded the man in the cloak, in a low voice, "but merely a humble soldier. Strange heathen kings have set themselves up to rule the land, and the Saxons must wait for a king who will rise up and set them free. Say no more of kings, gallant Herwin, but come to our cottage and be welcomed as our friend."

This man, then, thought Conrad in his stark amazement—this gentle, pious scholar who lived like an anchorite, attended by no one save his adoring wife, was that King Alfred, ruler of the West Saxons, who was remembered in Rome. Innocent and unsophisticated, they called him; untouched by the Roman world of venality and gilded vice; returning to his native wilderness as

guileless as he came, carrying with him only the beauty and wisdom that he absorbed from teachers as two-faced as Janus, bicephalic god of the pagan race.

Conrad walked as in a trance when the king led the way back to the cottage. He was of a family of senatorial rank in the Roman Empire, but he had held no public offices and been favored with no personal contact with emperors or kings.

For a Roman to meet one of the many kings of Britain's isles, and even this Alfred, most famous and for a time most powerful of the native chieftains, was to be taken by the mature and sophisticated as an amusing experience rather than a distinction, yet he felt strangely impressed, strangely subdued and awed—changed in some mysterious way from the being that had stepped from the cottage a moment before. •

This story began in the *Argosy-Allstory Weekly* for October 29.

There was no jeweled diadem, no scepter, no ermine robe, to make the royal presence fill the eye: it was, rather, the absence of all royal trappings, all pomp and circumstance, that made this man kingly and tied the tongue that might have flattered a gartered and gilded potentate.

On the threshold the king halted Conrad and Herwin.

"If my wish be reason sufficient for you, my friends," he said, "let no more be said of Alfred the King. It's better for the master of a cottage to be a simple man; the royal title better becomes the inmate of the palace in more auspicious times. I'm known to the yeomen who guard this island stronghold, and there are swine-herds and simple rustics hereabouts who know my secret.

"To others I am simply a leader, gathering Saxons together for one more blow at the foreign tyrant. Simple souls keep secrets and keep faith; it's the man that thinks too much who makes us fear that his tongue will break loose when silence is most precious."

The two young men therefore conducted themselves according to Alfred's request when they came into the presence of the women. To the latter Herwin was presented merely as another Saxon who had found his way to the island refuge and escaped from the invaders.

Edith was deeply moved at meeting the young Saxon, and a twinge of jealousy further unsettled the Roman traveler, particularly when Herwin announced that he had come to aid in protecting her from danger.

Hasting, the Danish conqueror of the castle, was sending patrols of his pirates along the roads to meet Waldher if he brought her back there, and seize the girl for Hasting before she could effect another escape. The Dane was moody and suspicious under the influence of Eadgar's bountiful supply of ale and mead, and threatened the lives of Eadgar's household if Edith was not delivered to him.

Herwin was astonished, but visibly relieved, when he learned of Waldher's failure to accomplish his mission. Though the two men were the chief retainers of Eadgar's household, they were personally at

variance, and the now alert Conrad quickly sensed that they had been rivals for Edith's favor long before he came upon the scene.

It developed in Herwin's recital of his adventures that he left the castle by stealth, soon after Waldher's departure, taking with him two men-at-arms that he could trust. He suspected Waldher of treachery on his own account, and resolved to thwart him if possible, and aid Edith and Conrad if they were in danger.

"How came you to think that Loris would lead Waldher to this remote place in Somerset?" inquired Alfred with interest.

"I hunted here as a lad, with my father," Herwin explained. "I know the trails in the marsh as Loris does, and though he tried to mislead us at the castle with his fanciful tale, I suspected at once that Edith and Conrad had found the way to the safest refuge in all Wessex."

A yeoman came to the cottage, as they were talking, and announced that a soldier from Devon had crossed the marsh and brought a message to Alfred from Odda, the ealdorman of Devon.

The king permitted Conrad and Herwin to go out with him, and they met the weary, travel-worn courier under the trees. The soldier had fought in Alfred's army in better days, and his face lighted up with joyful recognition when he saw the plainly dressed and kindly cottager standing before him. He prostrated himself at Alfred's feet, but the king raised him up and told him to give his message, and that he should then have refreshment and rest.

"Great news, my liege!" the man declared vociferously, though the king had cautioned him to avoid all reference to royal rank. "The noble Odda, our ealdorman, sends greetings and homage. In the dark of the last moon, Hubba, the great Viking chief, landed on our Devon shore with thirty ships of war and a vast army. He came to seize Devon and plunder our homes before marching into Wessex to join his king, Guthrum.

"Our brave Odda would not yield. He gathered the men of Devon into the Cynwith castle and sent his defiance to Hubba. He was threatened with terrible torture and death for his rashness, and when he still

flew his banners from the battlements and refused to treat with the Viking's messengers, Hubba drew his Danes about the castle and began a siege."

"Go on, good friend!" urged Alfred excitedly. "It was indeed rashness on the gallant Odda's part, for there has been hunger and sickness in Devon, and the castle must have been without supplies for a siege of any length. Go on; tell us how Odda escaped from the Viking's wrath. He lives, for you say he sent me greetings."

"You say well that the castle was without supplies," continued the messenger, with the soldier's love for delaying a climax and playing upon the suspense of his listeners. "Inside the walls of Cynwith there was scarcely bread and meat for a fortnight, and of water there was no more than the men brought with them in their leathern flasks. There are no water springs along the shore of our district, and we were faced at once with death from thirst."

"Yes, yes," said the king, "and what did you do?"

"We were surrounded, my liege. The men of our little band looked over the earthen ramparts and saw the shining helmets and bristling spears of the pirates on every side. We were hungry and thirsty, but no man dared take more than a morsel of bread or a sip of water at one time.

"The Viking and his officers hurled taunts and jeers at our men, and said that they would march into the stronghold over our bones when we were all starved and dead, for they were resting and making merry in their camp and would not give themselves the trouble of making an assault upon our walls."

"They are lazy roisterers," remarked Alfred, sighing as he resigned himself to wait the pleasure of the narrator. "Tell me, did Odda march his Devon men out of the castle and away while Hubba's pirates lay in a drunken stupor at night?"

"Nay, he did not, my liege!" said the soldier heavily, wagging his head. "But stay; I'll not say that he never marched them out of the castle, but I will say that he never marched them away. We sat tight inside our walls, far gone with hunger and thirst, and all day and all night we

heard the pirates singing and shouting over their feasts, and we knew that they were eating up the bread and meats of all the Devon homesteads, and drinking up the good ale and mead of Devon.

"Now, your hungry, starving man is not your best fighter—for a full man, well lined and light hearted is the most spirited and valiant in battle, but a hungry fellow is a right desperate one when he hears and sees the enemy devouring all the good things that rightfully were his."

"You should sit down, my good man," said the king with gentle irony, "for the tale is a long one and you are weary from your journey."

"It's a good tale, I promise you," said the soldier, "and it does my heart good to tell it. I can talk better on my feet, if my liege gives me leave to stand. We were starving, I say, and all the time we heard no sounds save those of the feasting and carousing of our foes. Then our brave Odda took his great sword in hand, and he spoke brave words to us. If we were truly hungry, said he—and thirsty, said he, why, then, we should find food and drink aplenty and to spare in the great camp of the Viking.

"We thought him going a bit mad from his own hunger," the soldier paused to explain, putting a check on his own growing excitement. "But he was not mad—not Odda! He said to us that we were good fighters and brave men, and the Danes about us were growing fat and dull with too much feasting and drunken sleep.

"He said, too, that the wicked Hubba would soon tire of waiting, and rouse his pirates to arm themselves again and sack the castle in a great assault. The time had come, he said, to break our fast—to strike a mighty blow for all Saxons and all Saxon homes."

"And you struck the blow?" cried Alfred, in a burst of impatience and with burning eagerness.

"Aye, we did! At night it was, in the dark of the moon. The pirates ate and drank all day, and at night they slept—or, rather, lost their senses. Out we went, with Odda and his sword in the lead, and we did not creep nor crawl. Boldly we

marched forth from the barbican gate of Cynwith, and our little band fell upon the great horde of heathen Danes.

"Take it not from me, a humble soldier, my liege," he said gravely: "Odda, our ealdorman, bade me say to you that a thousand Danes fell before our swords and axes in that fight."

"A thousand Danes!" cried the king, astounded, and his eyes flashed as with the ardor of battle.

"And what's more!" exclaimed the messenger, "the terrible Hubba himself—great fleet captain and general of the sea rovers, he was among the slain."

"Hubba himself!" gasped Alfred, and began pacing up and down in great agitation. "What a blow to Guthrum and all the war lords of the pagan host."

"And what's more!" rejoiced the soldier, "we took the sacred war standard of the Danes, the Raven standard. Never did Christian hands threaten the Raven emblem before, but we took it, and it flaps idly with every wind that stirs the banners on our walls. My gracious liege knows that the Raven is next to their gods, with the Danes, and without it they will not march to war."

"When they saw it fall—when they saw it borne away, and the Raven itself helpless to strike down irreverent foes, they broke and fled—fled back to their idle ships along our shore, and put to sea. The corpse of their chief was on the blood-drenched ground, and their Raven had become a toy for our men to play with."

"How beautiful, indeed, upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring us glad tidings of great joy!" exclaimed the pious Alfred, grasping the soldier's hand and smiling happily at the astonished Conrad and Herwin. "The winter is passing, my friends: Easter is almost here, and spring—happiest season of the year. The time draws near when we shall all strike, as the noble Odda struck, at the castle of Cynwith. The time is here, now, when we should send messengers throughout all Britain and bid our friends make ready for the day of days."

"Give me my orders, noble master," said young Herwin, "and I'll ride forth to-day."

"You are brave and loyal, Herwin," said

the king, "and I am proud to have you serve me in such a cause. But now I must reward this good soldier with refreshment and he must rest. I shall talk with you again when I have considered all these things."

"Come, friend Conrad," said Herwin earnestly, when the two young men were alone, "are you not proud of that strain of Saxon blood at such a time?"

"Why, yes, to be sure," said Conrad, "but I'm struck with grave misgivings, Herwin."

"How now?" challenged Herwin. "What right have you—or I, to feel misgivings when such a king as Alfred takes heart and is fired with hope and valor?"

"My fears are not quieted by your king's high spirits," said Conrad. "He is a great king, I grant you, but his greatness is in qualities of the heart and mind. What man of saintly spirit and pure virtue has ever triumphed on the battlefield? What conqueror has ever been a man of supernal grace and mercy? Look at it clearly, Herwin, and judge for yourself."

"You have not seen Alfred in battle!" cried the other. "He is as terrible a figure, then, as he is kind and gentle now. He's never beaten! A thousand men may fall at his side, but he goes off, battling like a giant possessed of mystic charms, and showing no fear when the enemy seeks his life on every side. I've fought beside him, Conrad, and I know."

"His spirit is never beaten, that may be," allowed Conrad, "but his men fall back and he finds himself alone in grim defeat. It has happened a score of times: the Saxons are always beaten, always retreating, always making terms. How many times has Guthrum, the Danish king, made peace with the trusting Alfred, only to break it and make war on him again?"

"Guthrum has made treaties because Alfred did defeat him, time and again," insisted Herwin. "Alfred is generous, and always full of confidence in friend or foe. The pacts were broken merely because Guthrum himself is a villain. He's a man of craft, shrewdness, and treachery, unworthy to have a knightly foe like Alfred the Saxon."

"All our enemies are villains," remarked Conrad, with a smile, "and the successful general or emperor treats his with corresponding cruelty and rigor. If your Alfred had put Guthrum to death long ago, he might not now be hiding in this forest; but he made generous treaties and welcomed Guthrum as a friend and ally, so Guthrum hankers for his blood and will not rest content while Alfred lives.

"Oh, do not doubt my admiration for your king, Herwin!" he added earnestly: "I see beatification and sainthood for him among all Christian folk, but while he lives on this unworthy earth there can be nothing for him but confusion and defeat. His nearest friends, I think, would best show their love for him by dissuading him from these vain enterprises against an overwhelming and unconquerable foe.

"Saxons and Danes are killed by thousands: the Saxons are few, and grow steadily less; but the Danes are like the tides of ocean, ever sweeping in upon the crumbling sands and washing them away. This chieftain Hubba came with thirty ships and a powerful army.

"Hubba is slain, and a remnant of his army flees away in the ships, but ten more chiefs will come from out of the north, with ten times thirty ships, and when all of Alfred's Saxons are mingled with the dust of Britain the Danes will still come on, till Britain is Denmark and the sea rovers turn their greedy eyes upon the continent of Europe and commence its conquest."

"You come from a dying world, Conrad," said Herwin bitterly, "and you see no hope of life in anything."

The young Saxon was moody and depressed, and Conrad almost regretted that he had so shaken him.

Alfred came again to them, glowing with zeal and full of plans for the new campaigns in defense of his exhausted people.

"Ride now, if you will, brave Herwin," he said, "and tell all our ealdormen and thanes to rouse their men and join me here. Ride through Wessex from west to east, and along the borders, and tell our vassals and comrades how bright is our hope.

"I had a dream," he added in a lower tone, while his face grew solemn. "St.

Cuthbert stood before me, and told me that he had tried me by certain tests and found me acceptable. He said that the day of Britain was dawning in the east, and he would stand beside me when I led forth my men to rout the unbelievers. Is not this miraculous victory of Odda a portent? The dawn is breaking, and we must rise with the sun. Whisper these things to our people as you ride among them, and say that I am arming and waiting for them."

"Herwin is but one," said Conrad, with a twinge of jealousy. "Will your majesty not want others to ride with the message?"

Alfred smiled happily and gave the young man a friendly glance.

"You have a kind heart, Conrad," he said, "and some good Saxon blood, but your heart is not Saxon. Believe me, I would have you do whatever your conscience commands. If I have read you aright, you are only a sojourner among us, and your mission here is to guard the Lady Edith from all danger until you go away and take her with you. That is your right, and I would not gainsay it—for I believe you honorable and true to your own lights."

"You will take Edith with you, Conrad?" exclaimed Herwin—not with hostility, but with an air of challenge. "Where will you take her, and what will you take her to? You have said that you were forced to flee from your home and your emperor. We understand that your estates in the east are forfeited and your future there hangs upon the hazard of fortune. Would Edith have other friends in that strange country, or would her safety and happiness depend on you alone?"

"Our Britain is a howling wilderness—if you will—but Britain is Edith's home, and her friends are here. I am your friend, Conrad, but for Edith's sake I would not hesitate to call myself your foe if that would save her from going to a land of nameless perils, where Christians sing the Master's praise and disobey His laws."

"Nay, I fear you are unjust to Conrad," Alfred objected. "I believe him true, and if he takes Edith from us he will be sure of her happiness, knowing what he does.

He has the exuberance of youth, but he is a man and would not hazard the happiness of a loved one upon the turn of fate."

Conrad grew uneasy.

"My plans are not yet made," he said. "But I do seek the happiness and security of the Lady Edith. If Britain is the place where she should stay, then I must stay here too. Meanwhile I am a man and would do the work of a man. If—"

"There is work for men right here," the king interrupted in a kindly manner, "and you can serve me well by remaining here. It is here, in Athelney, that our thanes will gather when the word has gone around. You will see what Saxon men can do, and perhaps you will grow to love them as your kinsfolk."

He turned, as having spoken the last word, and Conrad followed him and Herwin to the cottage, feeling himself a stranger.

CHAPTER XIV.

WANDERING GLEEMEN.

HERWIN rode out of Athelney next day, roughly clad in the leather and chain mail of a common soldier, to carry the summons to duty through Wessex and over the borders. He took leave of his friends as one doubtful of return, and again Conrad felt himself a stranger and an alien.

Edith kissed Herwin on the brow and prayed for his safe return, and explained dutifully to Conrad that the young man had been as a brother to her, so that she felt the anxiety and affection of a sister to him.

"I need no explanations, my love," said Conrad, "but I find myself wondering why you came to give your love to me, when you had the devotion of this brave youth already. Herwin is noble, and all can see that he adores you with that affection which makes a good man sacrifice every personal advantage to the happiness of the loved one. As for me, Edith, I am not so worthy: I would not give you up; I want you for my own."

"You are my true lover!" she exclaimed

happily. "Fate willed it so, and the charms of our pagan forefathers brought you to me. Don't be jealous or angry, Conrad, for I love you—and never as a brother."

Fretting at the virtually enforced inaction, and often quarreling with his conscience, Conrad sought exercise and went hunting in the forest with Loris for guide. They took a hooded falcon, and the jester gave the young man a lesson in the graceful sport of falconry.

Birds were plentiful in the wood and along the fens, and whenever Loris removed the hood from the trained hawk and slipped the leash upon his wrist, the feathered hunter soared aloft, pursued and struck its prey, and brought it to earth. The little clown's shrill whistle fetched the falcon back to his wrist and the leash and hood, and Conrad marveled at the skill which subdued and disciplined so wild a bird.

They returned to the cottage with a wild swan and some smaller birds for the enrichment of the larder, but to their astonishment and alarm they found the gentle Queen Elswitha in tears of grief and poignant suspense.

Alfred, the dauntless king, had left the island. Dressed as a traveling minstrel in hose and jerkin, armed only with a harp and a short sword, he went forth on foot to journey to the camp of Guthrum, the Danish king, there to see for himself the strength and power of the Viking's host, while masquerading as a native gleeman. Conrad was amazed, and he felt himself shaken with fear for the safety of the valiant king.

"He should not go alone!" he exclaimed feelingly. "Minstrels travel more often in company than alone, and there should be some one with him to aid him in the event of discovery and capture. Why could I not have gone?"

"My husband committed us—Edith and me—to your care, good Conrad," said the queen, bravely drying her tears. "He said that your place was here."

"With the women!" cried Conrad heedlessly. "Am I then fit for no sterner duty? Loris and the swine herds are here to serve

you and shield you from the island's perils—and so am I!”

“The noble Alfred was glad to leave us in your care, Conrad,” said Edith, “and he spoke well of you and your gallantry; but even though I am timid, and shrink from all dangers, I would have had you go with him in his adventure; I should have been proud.”

“Give me your leave and I will go now!” cried the young man. “Loris can guide me through the fens and I’ll find him and go with him.”

“He will be angry, I fear,” said the queen, “but I would have you go, if you are so inclined. In a moment we can find suitable raiment for you, and there’s another harp for you to carry—whether you can play on it or not. The harp is the badge of the minstrel, and a help in gaining admission even to a hostile camp.”

“I have played upon the lute,” said Conrad, “and I should be able to strum on the harp after a fashion, but singing the lays of the Saxon gleeman is beyond me, and I shall have to evade that issue.”

He was dressed presently in the appropriate costume, and the warmth of Edith’s farewell stirred him profoundly and banished his jealous fears. Loris led him out of the forest and through the trails of the marsh, and they hurried after the king with all speed, the jester exercising his skill as a woodsman in picking out the trail.

Darkness came upon them, and Conrad feared that they might lose the trail and fail in their efforts, but from a tree top the jester caught the flickering gleam of a fire, and at the end of an anxious and breathless march they found the king resting by the fire, wrapped in his cloak and munching some black bread from his leathern wallet.

He was not angry, as the queen had feared, but he betrayed a surprise that was not flattering to the volunteer retainer. He protested that the adventure was safe enough for a man alone, and explained that the Danish king had seen him only when he sat on a throne and was covered with armor and robes of state. Their parleys and negotiations had been carried on through ambassadors and scribes, and he felt sure that Guthrum would never sus-

pect the strolling minstrel of being the Saxon king in disguise.

“Nevertheless, I petition your majesty for leave to go with you,” persisted Conrad. “Certainly I am a stranger to the Danes, and I can pass so easily as a man of the southern country.”

“What is your object?” queried Alfred.

“To serve your majesty.”

“But that is not enough,” said the king soberly. “My majesty is the majesty of Britain, which I serve. A man is a poor thing in himself, but the cause for which he labors may be worthy in the sight of Heaven. If you come with me to further the interests of our great cause—to gain knowledge which may be of great use in aiding our people in their struggle—then I cannot refuse you my permission.”

“So be it, then,” said Conrad. “I come for the sake of Britain and the Saxon people, but let me believe that I serve those people best by guarding the life and liberty of their king.”

“You shall have it that way,” said the king good humoredly, “if it please you better so.”

Loris took leave of them reluctantly, pacified only by assurances that the women now depended for their safety on his faithful service, and before dawn he started on his return march to Athelney.

The king patiently instructed Conrad in the part that he was to play, and sang to him some of the ballads that he intended to use for his introduction to the Danish camp. They had a long journey before them, and the king insisted on frequent rests to keep them in fair condition for their ordeal. He carried a small bow and some arrows, and at times, while they rested, he hunted game and made stews over the fire of the night camp.

On the fourth day of the journey they came in sight of the vast camp of the Danish host near Ethandune, and they rested again and made all plans for a visit in the early evening, when the pagan king would be mellow with wine and probably less alert than during the daylight hours.

Spring was advancing, and the snow was melting from the fields and forest, but the Viking had no guards thrown out to

make his camp more secure. He doubtless felt no fear of a Saxon king who was believed to be either dead or hiding on the continent, and there were few Saxons gathered together at any one point in that region.

In the afternoon Alfred went up into the hills and surveyed the camp from certain points of vantage, taking note of its boundaries and the apparent disposition of troops and defenses. Conrad offered to write down notes upon his observations, but Alfred declined the service, explaining that they must be without incriminating evidence upon their persons when they entered the camp. His memory was good, he said, and already a map of the cantonments was graven on his brain.

At nightfall the landscape was dotted with the cheerfully leaping fires of the pagan army, and the two men guided their march upon them and went down into the valley.

As the king had expected, they were challenged by a small outpost some two or three miles from the camp's borders, and he affected a merry air and sang a gay ditty for the soldiers. He and his companion had made a painful journey from the Welsh country, he explained glibly, and were in quest of an audience where there was good cheer and some liberal folk who might show substantial recognition of skill in entertaining.

The outpost fed them from their rough rations, and readily passed them on to the inner guards, through which they passed with little more difficulty to the precincts of the great camp itself.

In a street of thatched huts and some imposing tents the king astonished his inexperienced companion by executing a merry dance for some Danish officers. They applauded his performance, gave him a horn of wine, and ordered him to play on the harp.

He played well, and sang a lilting Welsh ballad, unintelligible to the wondering Conrad, but evidently pleasing to their hosts. A Danish captain joined the group and appeared to like the entertainment, applauding vigorously every stanza of the ballad.

Presently the captain stopped the singer and directed him, with gruff good humor, to follow him to the royal pavilion. The king, he said, had supped well and heartily, and was doubtless in a mood for light entertainment such as vagabonds like the two strangers could furnish.

Alfred bowed his acknowledgments of the order, but did not glance at Conrad, lest their mutual satisfaction be betrayed by their eyes.

They took up their harps and followed the officers through the streets, and Alfred stared about him as they went, much as any simple mountebank might do, but making mental notes of every feature of the camp, and estimating the numbers and fighting power of the companies of soldiers that were ranged in order, street by street.

Near the center of the temporary city was the king's pavilion. The early spring nights were warm enough for the northern chieftain, and he had spread a great tent of striped cloth of various colors and decorated it with pennons and royal emblems.

At the front was a platform, raised above the damp ground, and reached by a flight of ten steps, and on this was placed the great throne chair under a gay canopy of Oriental fabric.

Guthrum was seated on the throne, and the visitors noted with some anxiety that he observed their approach without obvious pleasure. He was a man of heavy frame, getting stout amid the luxuries of camp life in a land that had furnished rich plunder, and he looked weary and bored.

He was wearing sumptuous robes and a gold crown of heavily embossed plates, studded with jewels, and it was easy to fancy that he pined for his rough armor and the thrill of the heaving deck under him, for he was a sea king of the race of Vikings, and unused to the quiet life of camp in winter.

The officer bowed low before the throne and begged the royal permission to introduce the minstrels. The king glowered upon him with ill humor, but grudgingly gave the permission and told him to direct the gleemen to sing some bright and lively ballad. Alfred acknowledged the com-

mand solemnly, but Conrad caught a twinkle in his eye, inspired by the incongruity of the situation. Guthrum was in the humor of a savage bear of the northern mountains, but he desired gayety, and was quite capable of ordering torture and death for any one who might disappoint him.

To Conrad's further astonishment, Alfred struck up a ballad in the Danish tongue. It was a strange language to the young Roman, but he recognized it from certain painful experiences of the past, and marveled at the Saxon king's easy familiarity with it.

It seemed necessary for the minstrel's assistant to play a part, so Conrad softly tuned his harp to the key of the other one.

Guthrum continued to scowl darkly, but after the first stanza was sung he nodded to the captain, indicating that the singing was to go on, and Alfred continued.

Conrad, taking heart at even so little encouragement, labored to carry on his own simple part, and presently he grew bold enough to cast his eye around the circle of officers and retainers that formed a background for the throne.

Suddenly his glance was arrested by a face, and a thrill shot through him which chilled his marrow. His fingers fumbled the strings for an instant, but he controlled himself sharply and went on.

Standing close to the left shoulder of King Guthrum, with dark and threatening eyes bent upon the minstrels, was Waldher, the Saxon knight of Eadgar's household.

Conrad had seen him last as he was driven half naked from the forest of Athelney by Alfred's henchmen, but it appeared that his fortunes had changed for the better. He was wearing rich armor of the Danish fashion, and he stood among officers that were high in favor of the Danish king.

CHAPTER XV.

MERRY WAR.

NO sooner did Conrad recognize the sinister face of Waldher among the officers and courtiers grouped around Guthrum's throne than he sensed clearly that Alfred also had discovered him. The

disguised king gave him a furtive sidelong glance that was eloquent of the gravity of their situation, but he did not falter. There was no interruption to the singing of the heroic Danish ballad, and the Saxon king sang it so well that the Viking listened attentively, even though his lowering brows did not lift to give promise of a softer mood.

Conrad strummed softly upon his harp, keeping up the harmony as best he could, and did not look at Waldher again. He knew that the knight was watching him and the king, but tried to appear unconcerned, while his mind was in a turmoil of confused thoughts and desperate ideas.

Waldher had evidently allied himself with the Danes more actively than Eadgar had done in keeping a truce with them, and the tie of Saxon blood would not serve to make him merciful, or forgetful of the indignities he had suffered at the hands of Alfred and his yeomen that day in the forest of Athelney.

King Alfred was either fearless and indifferent to the renegade knight's machinations, or a consummate actor, for he seemed to put even more fervor into his performance. The ballad, as well as Conrad could make out from his meager knowledge of the Danish tongue, celebrated certain heroic and glorious deeds of the sea rovers, and the audience in general gave rapt attention and obvious approval, though the Danish king's forbidding countenance was no index to his emotions.

At the end of the ballad there was vociferous applause from the officers and soldiers, and Guthrum nodded sullenly, but indicated with a gesture that the minstrel was to go on with his singing.

As Conrad expected, Waldher started forward toward the throne, his eyes gleaming with fierce purpose. Guthrum turned his head, scowled with irritation at the threatened interruption, and waved Waldher back to his place peremptorily.

What did Waldher know? That was the question that burned in Conrad's mind. Young Herwin knew King Alfred, but Waldher had betrayed no recognition when they met in the forest. There was trouble enough at hand, at any rate, but much de-

pended on whether the Saxon knight denounced the minstrel as the King of Britain in disguise, or merely demanded personal satisfaction for the punishment he had received at the rude tribunal in the wilderness.

Alfred did not wait for another sign to proceed, but seized upon the advantage of the moment to keep the audience beguiled. The highest degree in the accomplishment of the strolling minstrel of the day was in the improvisation of ballads for the occasion, and as he drew rich strains from the harp in a brisk prelude, his young companion gathered vaguely that he was engaged in an attempt to bring the entertainment to a climax.

He began the ballad with loud and extravagant praise of the power and magnificence of Guthrum, inviting the attention of all men to the prodigious extent and elaborate equipment of the Danes' war camp. With the crude imagery and satire of the typical gleeman, he compared the Danes and Saxons in their methods of warfare, with all glory and praise to the former.

This delighted the huge, simple-minded sea rovers, and they interrupted the singer with shouts of approval. One of the high officers sent a slave to offer his own drinking horn to the minstrel, and Alfred paused for an instant, took a draft of the strong mead, and humbly bowed his thanks.

He sang, in a long second stanza of his improvisation, of the wars between the Danes and Saxons, and celebrated extravagantly the victory at Chippenham which dispersed the Saxon army and gave the Danes control of all Wessex.

This was the common practice of Saxon gleemen in the presence of the conquering Danes, as it was their profession to entertain, and the audience required the most glowing lyrical tributes to the prowess of its men in battle.

The Danes cheered the singer and drank his health, and Guthrum again nodded slowly, without changing countenance, and signified that the singer should go on.

Again the Saxon knight, Waldher, stirred and seemed determined to break forth in denunciation of the minstrels. A savage sneer curled his lip.

"Royal Guthrum!" he cried out suddenly, just as Alfred struck the preliminary chords for a third effort. "A word! Let me speak, I beseech your majesty!"

The officers about him howled and jeered, bidding him be silent.

Guthrum smiled slightly, a hard and unpleasant smile.

"If the Saxon joins my camp and fights under my banner," he said, barely turning his head toward Waldher, "he must learn to hear the Danish triumphs celebrated. He may speak when it is my pleasure to bid the gleeman cease his singing."

Waldher flushed a dark and angry red, the more furious for being misunderstood, and he glared at the two minstrels in murderous fury.

It was now Alfred's cue, according to common practice, to belittle the race and arms of the Danes' enemies, striving to delight the victors with all possible irony and rude humor.

It was a bitter thing for the king and general of all the Saxon forces to do, but he entered into his grim masquerade with a spirit close to genius. Drawing upon the powers of his poetic talent and training, he improvised a broadly burlesqued satire, worthy the humorous skill of the Latin poets who had been his teachers in Rome.

He pictured the repeated routs of the Saxon troops and ridiculed their vain persistency in fighting the superior Danish masters. He sang of the beaten king of Mercia, fleeing cravenly over the waves, like a wild duck pursued by a noble hawk, to hide himself in a European monastery.

Inevitably he came to his own part in recent history, and when he uttered his own name, the Danish audience broke loose in wild roars of derision. The royal Alfred of the Christian Saxons, he sang, was not to be found on sea or land. Was he hiding among the fishes on the floor of the ocean, or with his cousins the rabbits in their deepest burrows?

The tipsy Danes were enchanted with the humor. They interrupted the singer with loud yells of applause, and presently the courtiers standing about the throne, where Waldher stood, grew more boisterous in their demonstrations. They jostled Wald-

her, reminding him with coarse jests that he was a Saxon.

Once more he felt himself misunderstood. He was ready enough to join in the general ridicule of the Saxon arms, but he had other fish to fry and was smarting under the cutting rebuke of the king. It irked him sorely to have his new comrades treat him like a Saxon churl, as though his feelings could be ruffled by the clowning of a minstrel.

A particularly rough and boisterous knight, with tumbled yellow hair and beard, fetched Waldher a stunning buffet across the shoulders, and bade him let the company hear a Saxon laugh. He demanded why a Saxon knight should not laugh at the delicious drollery, if he were true to his vows as an ally of the Danes.

"Yonder gleeman is a driveling fool!" shouted Waldher, "and he and his varlet are—"

Alfred had paused for a moment, waiting for the uproar to subside, and he and Conrad stopped breathing as Waldher raised his voice.

But the word of denunciation did not come out. The blond knight let out a roar of derisive glee, and with his huge arm and fist he struck the Saxon such a clout that his helmet was sent flying from his head, and he staggered and almost fell.

It was too much for flesh to bear, and as he recovered his balance his own fist shot out and caught the yellow-haired giant upon the jaw. Down went the boisterous joker with a crash of heavy armor and harness, and down went Waldher beside him, felled by the hammer blow of another Danish knight.

For the moment it was a riot of overgrown schoolboys. Noble retainers of the royal Dane on the throne scrambled with shrieks of joy to join in the *mêlée*, and, unable to reach their Saxon victim where he lay, they vented their joyous fury in blows at one another.

In that first delirious moment, even the king himself seemed likely to join the game. His eyes lighted up with spirit for an instant, and he rose from his seat, the better to see the scrimmage.

The sense of royal dignity returned, how-

ever, and he pounded with his heavy mace upon the floor and shouted angrily at the soldiers below him to rush in and quell the unseemly disorder.

A young captain of the guard leaped up to obey, followed by a dozen soldiers. The happy knights and courtiers, in the fury of their sport, caught the captain and hurled him off the dais, his legs and arms threshing among his soldiers as he went crashing down.

The soldiers shouted a battle cry and scrambled to support their captain. A knight took offense at such tactics and drew his sword, and in a flash the joyous game turned to violent battle. All swords were out, oaths and curses filled the air, and the king was forced to scramble from his throne and seek safety at a distance.

Conrad, astounded and fascinated, felt himself seized by a powerful hand.

"Come now!" cried Alfred tensely, and led him away swiftly into the dark shadows of the tented camp away from the flickering flares of torches.

Passing between the tents they came to a street, and it was deserted. All men were running to the riot near the royal tent.

"Such moments as this are granted to sober men!" Alfred gasped breathlessly. "We cannot stop for breath; the time is too precious. They'll battle there—till they're exhausted; then they'll be after us."

"But must we go?" exclaimed Conrad, vaguely disappointed. "To be routed like this, just as you reached the goal!"

"I reached the goal, and that is enough," returned the king with a smile of satisfaction. "I am young in years, good friend, but old in war—and the eyes are trained to act swiftly in war. I know the camp of Guthrum now, and as a soldier counts, I have counted his men."

CHAPTER XVI.

HOME.

THERE were cheerful signs of spring in remote Athelney. The birds were returning from the south and the forest trees were awakening to leaf and bud. But with the approach of spring came most in-

harmonious signs of human warfare. Alfred's trusted messengers, knights and yeomen sent into all the districts where loyal Saxons dwelt, were returning, and with them came the men that they had summoned, threading the mazes of the secret trails to the island, and making the former wilderness suddenly populous.

Odda, the ealdorman of Devon, brought in his dauntless little army, filing slowly through the marshes like marching ants. Men from the neighboring hamlets of Somerset came in, armed and trained for war. Alfred welcomed them with the joy of a father greeting his children, and men who had fought at his side through the long series of wars that made him a veteran in youth told Conrad that the king was now fired with a zeal which they had never seen in him before.

It was necessary to keep the incoming soldiers occupied, and there was more than a possibility that the warlike Guthrum and his Danes would take some notice of the gathering army, so Alfred began fortifying the island, which was already so well defended by nature. Earthworks were thrown up and storehouses prepared for the supplies that were coming in from Somerset.

The king himself drilled the troops and supervised maneuvers of the units from distant shires. Young soldiers were taught by veterans to handle spear and sword in attack and defense, and there were dangerous encounters in the field between companies of men from distant regions, when opposing factions almost forgot that the warlike exercises were not to be done in earnest.

Conrad offered himself as an instructor, and the king gladly permitted him to teach young officers to handle their swords with the intricate art of the Italian fencer—an art handed down from the famous gladiators of the palmy days of the Circus Maximus. The Saxon swords were ponderous weapons as a rule, almost as unwieldy as their battle-axes, but it was possible to achieve something more than mere chopping and hewing with them, and Conrad felt that he contributed something to the upbuilding of that hopeful enterprise.

A noble thane brought the knights and

yeomen of his clan from some far Northumbrian district, and in his retinue were certain clerks and priests attached to his household. One of the priests came to Conrad on the ground set apart for sword practice, just after the newly-arrived thane had received a lesson.

"Your name is Conrad—and you come from the Roman capital of the East!" he exclaimed a little excitedly. "Our thane told me that."

"That is true, holy father," said the young man, looking at him curiously and noting that he was distinctly of the Greek type. "Perhaps you yourself come from Byzantium, then? Many noble missionaries have come to Britain from our country."

"I took holy orders in Rome," explained the priest, "but my home was in Constantinople. Tell me, if you will, whether you knew the wealthy gentleman named Bardas in our city."

"He called me his friend," said Conrad, "and he proved his friendship for me by many a generous act."

"Then I have found you!" exclaimed the priest with evident delight. "Bardas was a friend of my family, and my generous patron. I came from Constantinople but lately, and joined the household of my Saxon patron to act as teacher to his sons. When I left home, I was put under solemn injunctions by the noble Bardas to seek through Northumbria, or over all Britain, until I found a worthy youth named Conrad."

"You may picture to yourself my dismay, my distress," he continued "when I found that Britain was not the small island that I had pictured it in my dreams. One might spend a lifetime in searching the mountains and forests of Northumbria alone."

"But you perceive, young sir, the far-reaching power of prayer in our Christian church. I was bound to fulfill my solemn promise to Bardas, and I prayed for aid in my task. Terrible war, now in prospect, brought me far across the wild country to this remote spot, and here I found you waiting for me!"

"You have, then, a message for me from the noble Bardas?" inquired Conrad.

"A message of the greatest import," answered the priest. "You came here as an exile, my son, and through no actual fault of your own. Now it is my happy duty to tell you that you may return in peace and safety to our native city."

"Impossible!" cried the young man, incredulously. "Bardas himself told me that there was no hope while the Emperor Basil lived. The emperor is not dead?"

"The emperor lives, but in the short time that you have been absent, our teeming Roman life has not stood still. Nestorius, a scheming politician and a man of evil life, rashly conspired against the person and power of the emperor—even while he posed as one of the great Basil's first counselors, and enjoyed the confidence of the Imperial court. I need not tell you that Nestorius is no more, for you know the ways of the emperor."

"But, even so," said Conrad tensely, "I can hardly see how the downfall and death of Nestorius could bring me liberty and reinstatement as a citizen. I talked too much—I was too much given to idle gossip, and a man who is denounced for seditious utterances is never pardoned."

"The ways of Basil the First are not the ways of his predecessors," said the priest. "He is a simple man, while showing complexities of character beyond belief; he is simple when seeming most complex. I will spare you the horrible details of the punishment of Nestorius. Suffice it to say that Basil ordered for him a death more whimsically ghastly than the executioners of modern times have known."

"Then, when the emperor could do no more to the flesh of Nestorius, he cast about for other means of gratifying his enduring hate. He sought out the multitude of enemies that Nestorius had made for himself, and those that were languishing in prison he pardoned freely, no matter what crimes or offenses against the state they had committed."

"The worthy Bardas, you may be sure, was active in behalf of all his friends who had suffered at the hands of Nestorius. Your name was brought before the emperor's council, and Bardas employed shrewd advocates to show that you were

innocent of evil intent, and were at heart a loyal citizen. With a wave of the Imperial hand, you and a hundred men like you were granted full pardon and reinstated to all your rights as Roman citizens of the Eastern Empire."

"It is almost past belief!" gasped Conrad. "If you yourself had not brought me the message, holy father, I should hardly dare give it full credence."

"Go back now to your native city, my son," said the priest, "and you will find your old friends waiting to welcome you with glad hearts. Your estates, your city house and your villa, are restored to you by the Imperial decree—and Bardas bade me say to you that a man is fortunate who comes to the notice of the emperor, even one who has been proscribed."

"'Tell Conrad to come quickly home,' said Bardas to me, 'and who knows what good fortune may not await him, while the emperor is in his present humor? Basil has elevated former enemies of his to high position, merely because his sympathies were transferred from one faction to another.'"

"Home!" Conrad breathed, with shining eyes. "What magic there is in the word! I have been something of a wanderer, and I often belittled my native city. It is the weakness of youth to be blind to the charms of familiar things—often until it is too late to reclaim them. Indeed, I shall go home, if ships still cross the channel, and I shall tell Bardas, good father, how diligently you sought to carry out his instructions."

"I, too, would go home," murmured the priest, bowing his head dejectedly for a moment. "What a wilderness it is, this Britain! But we who are in the service of God, we have only one home—God's heaven. When all is said, there is no earthly home for the man of spiritual things."

"All these worldly things are part of our preparation, and if we set our hearts too much upon them, we suffer as we deserve to do. My work is here, where I have been sent, and it only when I yield for a moment to the false emotions of my former state of ignorance, that I grow weak and foolish."

"But go you home, my son," he added,

feelingly, "for you are a young man of the world, and there's neither work nor comfort for you in these isles. The empire needs noble men—like Bardas. Go home, Conrad, with my blessing on you, and be a good man—a good Roman. I must stay here, if it is God's will, and be a good worker in His vineyard."

Conrad was much moved, and tears were in his eyes as he knelt down and received the priest's blessing.

He hastened, then, to the cottage where the king still dwelt as a humble soldier, though the island was teeming with noblemen and knights who did him homage. He told the king and queen, while Edith stood at his elbow listening in wide-eyed excitement, what news the priest had brought him.

"Good news, indeed!" exclaimed Alfred. "For you, my friend, but not for us. You have come to be close to our hearts, you see, and we shall give you up with sorrow. But it is right that you should go to your own home, and a fortune is not lightly to be rejected in this world. If our land had peace, and I had a home and an estate in Wantage or in Winchester, what could tempt me to wander from such a home. As our years increase, we crave peace and certain comforts—but they are not for all of us, and we must go on in our allotted service that we may deserve eternal peace."

Conrad heard a low, stifled sob, and turned to find Edith in tears and dark despair.

"My dear love!" he cried, seizing her in his arms. "Do you not see what happiness is in store for us? I came straight here to give you the glad tidings, believing that you would rejoice, and knowing that our gracious friends would rejoice with us. My home that waits for me in the East is your home, and great happiness is in store for us."

"I do not know that, dear Conrad," she said miserably, though she dried her tears. "You once admitted, in our talk, that your noble great-grandmother was never well content in Roman cities, and that the Romans admired her beauty, but never took her to their hearts. You speak of home so heartily, my dear, but it is *your* home,

not mine; and love is not always strong enough to make a home for one where there is nothing else to sustain the heart."

Conrad was suddenly cast down. The girl was changed: she seemed strangely matured and wise, while he felt all at once more boyish, more like a lad who had been on a playful jaunt and was going home at the close of a holiday.

"You are a woman, dearest Edith," he pleaded, "and surely a woman must value the beauties and comforts of life. In Constantinople we have houses such as you rarely see in Britain. There are windows of clear glass and beautiful colors, to keep the wind from blowing through the house.

"It is never cold in our houses; our servants build great fires in low stone cellars, and the gentle heat is carried to our rooms through pipes like water conduits. Winter to us is but the name of a season: we have but little snow or ice; and summer seems always with us, with flowers of great splendor and richest verdure in our gardens. Famine is unknown, and our tables are laid with delicate fruits and dainties from all the countries of the earth."

She smiled rather wanly and looked into his eyes with a curious intentness.

"When you leave your house," he persisted, "you pass to visit friends or go to another city over smooth pavements, like floors, and you ride in handsome carriages, or palanquins borne by slaves.

"If you cross water, it is in gilded barges, pushed with silent oars, and you rest and enjoy the beauties of the glorious gardens along the shore, while a canopy is stretched above your head and a slave fans you if the air is warm.

"For friends you will have beautiful women who have learned the arts and can read and write poetry in the classic forms. Illustrious men will come to your house as guests, artists and philosophers, learned doctors, famous soldiers and judges and statesmen. You will be—"

"A Roman gentleman of your station, Conrad," she interrupted, "should find his mate among those beautiful women who read and write and speak in the classic forms."

"But I left them!" he protested. "I

came here, and I found my love here waiting for me. Surely, I am old enough to know something of my own mind—my own heart!”

“You came here,” she said almost severely, “because you were a fugitive from the imperial tyrant of your country. It pleased me, Conrad, to fancy that the old charms of my heathen ancestors conjured you to come and meet me in the temple of the Druids; but that was child’s play. The scene was romantic, and—we are both young. When you return to your city, you will see that many of those women you speak of, are more beautiful than I, and—they are learned in the classic forms.”

“A plague on the classic forms!” he cried, exasperated. “What do you mean, Edith? You say: ‘When you return to your city’; do you mean that you would let me return alone—that you would not go with me?”

Tears came to her eyes again, but she spoke in an even tone.

“For your sake, my dear, if not for my own good, I should not go,” she answered. “Parting is very bitter sorrow, when two persons love, but it is far better to part than to endure a long life of dull regret. You yearn for your home, but it is not mine. Here we have no canopied barges, no magical ways of heating the houses, no eternal summer in our gardens; but *my* home is here.

“Is your spring in the Greek isles as lovely as our spring? Do your great and splendid flowers smell as sweet as our simple blossoms? You have told me of the storks and cranes, the peacocks and birds of Paradise, that walk in your gardens: I should pine for the larks and nightingales of Wessex.

“Your trees are always green, and I should weary of it; I should miss the autumn oak, growing red like a million flowers, and the whispering leaves fluttering down to make a carpet for my walks in the forest.”

“Would you miss the savage Danes?” he challenged, with dull resentment. “In Constantinople we sleep peacefully at night, knowing that no barbarians will come to sack our homes and put us to death by tor-

ture. I pray to Heaven for the triumph of his majesty King Alfred, here, but if the Danes overwhelm him, what is Britain then but a wild colony of the fiercest pirates of the seas? Will you then still love your home in Wessex—when Wessex homes are naught but smoldering ruins?”

“Why, yes, if I were let live,” she answered. “Great homesteads and great nations have been made by the toil and devotion of those who loved them. Death and disaster are not always the end of everything: spirit lives and grows to greater strength by rising above defeat. If people fled from their homes and lands whenever the enemy came in and won a victory, there would be in all this world neither homes nor nations, and the people would wander forever over the earth like the Tartars and the Arabs that I have read of.

“No, Conrad,” she added with sterner resolution, “I shall never go with you to Constantinople. It almost breaks my heart, but we shall part as lovers, and remember our love—and we might not live as lovers there, where I would be a stranger.”

Conrad turned appealingly to the sober and silent king.

“Your majesty might speak to her,” he said helplessly. “Is it not better for a frail child like her to go to a country where there is peace and comfort for all?”

“But *is* there, good Conrad?” the king said kindly. “I did not know there could be enduring peace and comfort anywhere in the earth. Your city has been sacked, and there will be other wars to come near it. Rome itself has lain in ruins, and even now it is threatened continually by the barbarians from the pagan countries.

“No,” he went on gravely, “I do not know what I could say to the Lady Edith for you. What she has said is bitter for a lover, but it is too near the fundamental truth to be gainsaid. She is a rare and delicate flower, and transplanting is at best a dangerous process; she might not endure the change to an alien soil.

“And I would not take it on myself to counsel you to remain here,” he continued. “You have been loyal and brave as a friend, and at times I grew to hope that

you might adopt the land of your Saxon ancestors; but you have much of the Roman in you, and we who dwell in Britain because it is home to us can scarcely know how savage and primitive our country seems to you."

"If I go home," said Conrad, casting a reproachful glance at Edith, "it will be with a broken heart. Life never can be the same again, and I may find solace in studying for holy orders."

"A worthy object for any man," observed the king, "but surely not one to be taken as a desperate measure. Heart-breaks are painful things, but the recuperative powers of youth are great. Most passionate and heroic lovers have their hearts broken, and get them mended so that they love again."

"At any rate, I would not stay here," said Conrad sullenly. "Edith has cast me out and shown me that her love was never strong enough to endure a test. Her majesty the queen came here to this wilderness and was cheerful under hardship and privation because she loves so deeply."

"But Edith came here too," the king reminded him patiently, "and braved the dangers of the warlike country and the forest to be at your side. Then my beloved queen was not leaving her home, you see: all Britain is her home, as it is mine, and even the wilderness is dear to us."

"Even now," said Conrad, with furtive glances at the melancholy maiden, "at one word from Edith I would remain here, and renounce my rights of citizenship and all my fortune."

"I am not so selfish that I would speak the word," said Edith, "and I fear that the memory of your great sacrifice would ever stand between us as a barrier."

"The romance of the Druid temple is over!" the young man declared tragically. "For you it was an adventure, but I thought that a great love had come to me. You will be happier, I can see, if I am gone, so I shall go—but with all earnest prayers for your happiness through all your life, my dear. In my home I shall live alone—the quiet life of a student, a recluse. Beyond that the world has nothing more to give me."

"If you are determined, then," said the king, "I would urge you to lose no time. The winter is almost gone, and spring is bringing us war. If you leave us at once, the good Loris will guide you by safe routes to the coast. In Somerset you should find mariners who will make the voyage to some port in a peaceful country, and the journey overland to your home will be easily made. We shall miss you sorely, my friend, but if you tarry here the war is likely to come upon us, and your escape will be cut off."

"My mind is made up," said Conrad, "and I'll be off at once. An hour's delay would make no one happier. I'll find Loris and prepare for the journey now."

He left the cottage, walking erect with an air of grim defiance, and before dusk his white horse stood before the door, saddled and harnessed for a long march. Loris, the clown, was mounted on a pony, equipped for the task in hand and as cheerful as usual.

Conrad knocked on the cottage door and begged leave to say farewell to his friends. The king, the queen, and Edith joined devoutly in a prayer for his safety and health, then tenderly wished him Godspeed on his journey.

He raised the girl's hand to his lips in parting.

"All my life I shall think of you every day," he said, "and pray continually for your happiness."

"And I for yours," she whispered.

"And if you are ever in need of a champion," he added, a little grandly, "I will come across the world to you. Wherever I am, one word will bring me to your side. Farewell!"

He bowed low and saluted the king and the queen as humbly as he would have paid homage to Rome's emperor, then he marched stiffly out of the cottage, snatched the bridle from the hand of Loris, and vaulted into the saddle.

"Farewell!" he cried again, to the grave and silent Edith, as he saw her face framed in the doorway, and he touched the charger with the spur and galloped off.

Edith turned then from the door, and when she saw the king and his consort

regarding her tenderly she took a faltering step toward them and swooned in the queen's arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SAXON HEART.

CONRAD and Loris made a camp in Selwood forest for the first night, and reached the seacoast the next day, but there were no trading ships there, and of the hardy fishermen of Somerset there were to be found only a few aged fellows too infirm to march to war. The Somerset men were in Athelney, whence the travelers had come, training for war against the Dane.

Conrad was disappointed and depressed, and he viewed the waters of Bristol Channel with dull eyes.

"Must I stay here, then, and be a hermit on the beach forevermore?" he demanded of Loris. "Go back to Athelney I never will. I have known too much anguish in these last hours to go back and be flouted and laughed at by a woman."

"The coast of Britain is a long one," said the clown, "and if a man were to keep on walking he'd surely come at last to a ship, for I never heard of a coast that had no ships. And I'd not go back, if I were you, master, for you don't know yet how well off you are. Any woman can make trouble for any man, but your strong-willed woman is the worst, and if she'd make you so downhearted now, what would she do if you were married to her?"

"You are a fool by trade, and it follows that you must be a fool by nature, Loris!" said Conrad sullenly. "What do you know about women?"

"Enough to leave 'em alone, master," said the jester, "and there are some very wise and learned men who cannot say as much. Your hermit is the happiest man of all, and he doesn't need to live in a cell to be one. I've been a hermit these twenty years or more, but I've lived in the seclusion of the merry world, and been alone as much as any anchorite on a mountain top. I've never tied myself to any woman nor any woman to me, so I'm as free as the

birds—nay, I'm freer than the birds of the air, for they're great on marrying; and I have known right handsome birds to be henpecked till they'd sit on the eggs like old hens.

"I'll never say the Lady Edith is no fine and beautiful lady," he continued, "but—by your leave, master—when I saw her come from the postern gate at the castle, all in hose and doublet like a boy, and cast herself in your arms, I said to myself: 'There's the end of a fine young gentleman, for he'll be no more than half a man hereafter.' A little more, and you'd made your escape from the castle, a free man, but these women don't let a man escape so easy."

"That will do, Loris!" snapped Conrad. "You chatter like a magpie, and for nothing. You're a good-natured fellow, and mean well enough, but your sober wits were clipped in early life. I'm a broken man. For every man there is the one woman somewhere in the world. Fate led me to my mate, but she was more cruel than fate, and she cast me out."

Loris smiled respectfully, and answered in a subdued voice:

"I've heard tell of these true mates a thousand miles apart, and it may be so ordered, but I've noticed that most good men find the one woman without going far. Wherever a man finds himself, and there are women there, the *one woman* will pop up before he's grown much older—and I've seen good fellows take up with some sadly ill-favored wenches and swear that fate had a hand in it."

On the following day, as no sail appeared on Bristol Channel, Conrad grudgingly took the clown's advice and started a melancholy march around the coast of Britain. Still no seaworthy craft was sighted, and Loris modified his counsel. There were good mariners on the Cornish coast, he said, and time might be saved by cutting across the peninsula to the south.

"With Cornwall full of Danes, and the coast the landing place of all their pirates!" objected the young man.

"Britain's full of sharp-nosed hounds," argued Loris, "yet the fox manages a living along the hedgerows. And there's this

about a broken man: if he's lost the love of life, and doesn't care a fig for anything, then Danes and demons need have no terrors for him. A Danish spear makes as sure an end of trouble as anything."

"You are right!" cried Conrad in hearty agreement. "We'll go through Cornwall, and I ask nothing better than to meet my old enemy Hasting, and let him be clothed in solid steel and armed like Hercules! I'll embrace him like a brother!"

Two days later, however, the distraught youth claimed the right to change his tune. They rode in mellow country that was bursting into spring, and when they came upon an ancient Roman road, hard as pavement, they turned their weary horses that way and followed it toward the sea. Loris was the first to hear the beat of other hoofs, and the first to see the glint of sunlight on helmets and spears, and he warned Conrad that Danish soldiers were approaching.

"It 'll be Hasting himself and all his pirates, marching to join King Guthrum in the hills," he predicted; but did not check his pony.

"We cannot give battle to an army, you and I," said Conrad. "We'll hide in the forest and let them pass."

"As you please, master," agreed the clown with a twinkle in his eye, and led the way into cover on a hillside.

When they were securely hidden, it was Loris who skillfully bound thongs about the horses' noses and held them firmly while the enemy was passing on the road, lest they salute the marching horses with neighs and snorts.

Watching from the forest, they saw five hundred Danes pass on that Wessex road, with the sinister Hasting riding at their head. They were fully equipped for war, and stout and hearty from a winter of plundering and feasting.

"Eadgar and his Saxons are not with them," remarked Conrad. "Is the treaty broken, or is Eadgar bottled up in his own castle?"

"More likely Eadgar's dead," said Loris in a flash of pessimism. "It's the way of Hasting and his like, to live and fatten on a host like Eadgar while the good cheer

lasts, and then slaughter all hands when there's no more use for them."

The two lay quiet until the Danes were moving specks upon the skyline, then took the road again.

Once more, toward evening, Loris gave warning of an approaching armed force, and from another covert they saw a band of Saxon soldiers riding with Eadgar, the thane, in the lead.

Loris was thrilled at the sight of old friends and comrades, and the curiosity of Conrad overmastered his sober judgment. They rode from cover and hailed the marching column.

The thane greeted them warmly and urged them to ride with him.

"We have escaped our prison," he said, without much spirit, "and I ride to the rallying place in Somerset to offer my men to the king. Waldher is gone from us, we know not where, and Herwin is reported with the new army. I am fast getting old, and the winter of oppression has worn me down, but now that the tyrant and his savages have quit our castle, I must ride again, and perhaps strike one more blow for our king and Britain. We need young men like you, Conrad. Will you ride with us?"

"My way lies across the sea," was the answer, "and I shall ride no more in Britain."

"But Edith?" queried the thane. "We learned that she was with you in Athelney."

"The Lady Edith is safe in Athelney with her majesty the queen," said Conrad gruffly. "I have no ties to bind me to your land, and I am going home."

Eadgar was too cowed, too languid, to show a lively interest in anything, but Conrad explained to him briefly the circumstances of his recall to the Eastern capital.

"You are wise to go back, young man," said Eadgar. "There's no more peace or happiness in Britain. We are a conquered, dying race, and the Danes will soon overwhelm us and blot us out."

"You have not the spirit of your king," observed Conrad. "Go on to Athelney, and you will see a new Britain growing up under your eyes. The king is blithe and

merry over his preparations for war, and he never speaks of defeat."

"Yet he has always been defeated," sighed the thane. "He hopes too much, and has too much confidence in himself. Guthrum has hoodwinked him time and again with empty promises and treaties, and when summer comes Guthrum and his pirates swarm over the whole land again, and we grow steadily less and less. I go to join the king, but it is my duty as his vassal; I do not go with confidence or hope."

Conrad sighed with him. He, too, had seen the rude might of the Dane, and wondered at the perennial rally of Alfred's puny army. To dwell with the king and hear him talk of victory was inspiring, and it filled a man with his infectious spirit, but away from Athelney there was nothing to brighten the scene, and the outlook grew dismal.

A flight of short arrows fell upon the party where it was halted, and two soldiers dropped lifeless where they stood.

"An ambuscade!" cried Eadgar, turning white like marble. "To the forest! Fly for your lives!"

His men needed no urging. They broke their column and scattered wildly over the field toward the forest, and a body of Danish troops broke out of their ambush on the other side of the road and charged across the open ground with fierce yells, sending arrows and javelins after the fleeing Saxons.

"Craven coward!" Conrad shouted to Eadgar. "They are but human beings like you!"

He spurred his charger and rode after the panic-stricken men, galloping among them in the field.

"Back, Saxons!" he cried. "Are you women? Turn back and follow me! Are the Danes such monsters that they turn your blood to water?"

He could not turn their headlong rush, and he was carried with them to the edge of the wood. There, however, in the shelter of tree trunks, they stopped for breath and to look at the terror behind them, and they stared at the young man and listened to his impassioned words.

"Come back with me!" he implored them. "Are you the men that were marching to King Alfred? What would he do with chicken-hearted cowards? Come back and fight for your Saxon name!"

"They're coming on!" yelled a stout yeoman, his face turning yellow with fear.

"We'll meet them!" roared Conrad, flourishing his sword above his head and turning the white horse to face the enemy.

"They outnumber us, Conrad!" groaned Eadgar, riding to his side, still pale and gasping.

"Then give me your shield and sword—I need them!" Conrad cried, and snatched the heavy weapons of the thane from him.

"Now follow me, Saxons!" he shouted. "I'm a Saxon, too! Show these pirates that there are men in Britain!"

He rode alone toward the advancing enemy, holding his shield aloft and offering battle.

Some hiding yeomen called him a fool and urged him to come back, but one brave soldier ran out of the cover alone, brandishing his spear and following the solitary leader.

Suddenly a faint cheer rose from the thicket where they hid, and five more men darted out and joined the first one.

Then there were cries of horror, as Conday spurred into the very front of the oncoming foe. The leader of the Danes was a big fellow, well mounted and heavily armed, but the young Roman charged and engaged him.

The Dane swung his broad sword like an ax upon Conrad's shield, pounding it down, but the oak and copper held, and Conrad kept his seat. The horses were wheeled about, and at the next encounter Conrad bent low in the saddle, evaded the other's crashing blow, and slipped his own sword under the Viking's shield and through his body.

A howl like that of a wolf pack went up from the Danes as they saw their captain crash to the ground, and they charged upon his slayer to annihilate him. But now the Saxons were out of the wood, and the two forces met with a shock, catching the man on the white horse between them.

Arrows from the heavy horn bows of the

Danes stuck in Conrad's shield, while others grazed his head and ripped his tunic. He swung the heavy sword about him like a flail, chopping in the native manner, for there was no more time or room for fencing.

The rallying Saxons saw his face and marveled at the light in his eyes and the grim smile on his lips. They cheered him with ancient battle cries, and fell like wild beasts on the Danes that sought to reach him with their spears.

The white horse was fighting with the spirit of his master, lashing out at the attacking men with his hoofs and snapping his great teeth in fury. The Saxons saw him and were newly stirred and awed, for the white horse had been a sacred emblem to Saxons and to Cornishmen in ancient times, and ancient superstitions still lurked in Saxon minds.

It was easy for them to fancy that the white horse of their fathers had come in the flesh to bear their leader to them.

A Saxon yeoman yelled to his comrades in all the din of the combat that a spear had struck the naked neck of the horse and been turned as though by armor, leaving no scratch.

The word was passed, and then the yeomen yelled a battle cry that struck to the hearts of the Danes. The tide turned, as every Dane saw a Saxon demon plunging at his throat and shrieking for his blood. Some Danes fell back, and in a moment they were all in rout, now seeking the cover of the forest in their turn.

"No mercy!" cried Conrad, "to men who show no mercy!"

He carried the fight into the forest, and the white horse bore him swiftly through the trees without a scratch from branches or from hostile spears. The Saxons plunged after him and disappeared in the thickets.

Out in the abandoned field Eadgar and his jester stood alone.

"He lives!" exclaimed Eadgar in a harsh, dry voice. "He is one of those men that cannot be slain with steel. His spirit, too, spreads about him and enters the souls of other men. My Saxon churls have become giants and fire-breathing monsters."

"We are but common clay, my master,"

murmured Loris, thoroughly cowed and humbled by the spectacle he had witnessed. "Other men are born under other stars, and their hearts and brains are fashioned of a different matter."

The white horse came out of the wood, bearing his flushed and triumphant master. After them came the Saxon men, and Loris declared that they licked their chops and rolled their eyes like wolves after an orgy of gore.

"Here are your Saxons, Eadgar," said Conrad, scarcely concealing his contempt for the elder man. "They needed a master, and their thane was but a poor nurse, putting them back in swaddling clothes."

Eadgar flinched at the rebuke and bowed his head.

"I have been to the wars," he murmured in weak defense, "and there are men who will say that I fought like a man. But I'm no longer young, brave Conrad, and the blood grows thin and cool. These heathen tyrants have lived upon my life blood like foul leeches, and I am sick in body and soul—ready to lie down and give up the ghost."

"A sick man," said Conrad, moved to pity, "has no place in the hostile field. You should be in your castle, Eadgar, with doctors to mend your broken frame and failing spirit."

Eadgar turned to his men, who were gathered about, listening to the talk.

"My name and honor have been defended by you men this day," he said feelingly. "Your thane is grateful for your brave support in his hour of trial and failure. We are all grateful to God for sending us a champion when the enemy was prevailing.

"Now turn back, good lads," he went on, "and return to our castle, where we should have been content to stay. There you shall disperse to your homes and farms, and once more we may put the plow to the sod and have a harvest for the winter."

To his astonishment, a savage roar went up from his retainers.

"We be not churls and farmers when war's in the land, master," protested a yeoman. "Let us go on—on to Alfred's camp. Let us run the Danes from our islands and send them over their sea."

Eadgar looked about him hopelessly, quite distracted.

"Ah, what shall I do?" he moaned. "I am unmanned, good friends. I shall never lead you in the chase or to the wars again. My lieutenants are gone from me—Waldher and Herwin, and I'm sadly alone. Why do you have this sudden lust for war? War brings us only death and devastation. Your wives and children are crying for bread and meat. Return to them and let those who live for war have it and die in their own manner. The Danes will prevail again, and yet again; each summer brings them on in swelling numbers, but till our land is wholly given over to them, let us cherish our homes and have such peace as is left to us."

"The Danes will *not* prevail!" cried Conrad suddenly in an awful voice. "Your tongue, Eadgar, has caught the infirmity of your mind. This rich and noble land—this Britain, is Alfred's land. No king in Christendom is fit to be cup bearer to our Saxon Alfred. He, of all men that my eyes have seen, is truly the anointed of God, and you are a heathen churl if you say that the pagan shall prevail over him."

"These are Saxon men—Alfred's men!" he cried, lifting up his voice afresh, and sweeping his arm in an impressive gesture toward the staring soldiers. "Who and what are you, Eadgar, to bid them go to the plow and the pigsty? Do you dare deny your king? Do you dare give orders thus to the king's own men?"

"These men, I say, are Saxons, worthy of their sires, and they wait for their king that they may give him their service, their blood, and their lives. Alfred—royal Alfred waits in Athelney, and there these loyal subjects are marching, to join their brother Saxons under the royal banners."

The men waited for the last word of his stirring speech, and then they raised their voices in thunderous unison, cheering for the man, the white horse, and King Alfred.

Eadgar shrank back as from a stormy blast.

"But who will lead them?" he asked weakly. "You, Conrad, are faring beyond the seas, not to return. And you are more Roman than Saxon, though you have a

brave heart and a love for your northern cousins."

"I shall not go overseas," said Conrad, and glanced defiantly at the gaping Loris. "Sometimes one strain of blood flows stronger than another, and my heart beats faster and my pulses bound under these northern skies. Perhaps the answer is, that I am *less* Roman than Saxon!"

"You, in your sickness, say that this land is failing, but I see nothing but brightness in the skies, and God's plenty bursting from the teeming soil. I'll go with these men to lead them to their king, and I'll go with them when they march to meet the Dane."

"Come, Saxons," he called. "Let us march on. Follow the white horse, as your sires did in their day. I'll be your leader, and if you are asked my name, say that I'm Conrad the Saxon, liegeman to Alfred the King."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ETHANDUNE.

CONRAD and his men were marching through Wessex fields and meadows by night, and he was about to order a halt and make a camp, when a great light filled the northern sky, throwing the moon in shadow by its splendor and snuffing out the stars.

The men were startled and they stood aghast, staring at the radiant spectacle and wondering greatly. It seemed to top the Wiltshire hills, and it flared and wavered like a giant's torch, now dying down for a moment, now leaping up afresh and threatening the very zenith.

As had come to be their habit, the men looked confidently to their leader for an explanation, and it was forthcoming.

"That is Alfred's beacon," he said with firm conviction. "He has summoned his thanes and their troops to the meeting place, and it was told that at the last he would light a mighty beacon on one of the highest hills, as a signal for the great muster of all his men. The signal is lighted, and we are needed at the rallying point. Our legs are weary, but our hearts are

light. No camp for us this night, but a forced march, and we shall not be late."

The men cheered the announcement, and marched sturdily on without a rest.

Alfred was out of Athelney and waiting for his muster at Egbert's Stone on the edge of Selwood forest. His household he left at the cottage, where it had been so long, and around him now were nobles of his kingdom, powerful thanes from the distant shires, and stanch yeomen who came with troops of the farmers of their districts.

For days the armies and odd detachments had been moving in from every quarter, and the great beacon hastened the steps of the late comers and brought a formidable host together almost on the stroke of the appointed hour.

No Danes were in the field, and their inaction puzzled the king; but the haughty Guthrum scorned his Saxon neighbors and foes, and it was not unlike him to sit in his camp at Ethandune and let them come and go as they pleased, calmly assured that he would brush them off like gnats if they came too close for his comfort.

It was certain, however, that the Viking king knew little of Alfred's plans, and less of the numbers of men that were moving over the roads of Britain and through the forests. No muster had ever compared with this one in numbers or zeal, and Alfred reviewed the cohorts with glowing pride, conferred with his trusted generals, and watched alertly for some movement from the mighty camp at Ethandune.

Many of the thanes had doubted that their king still lived, so long had he been hidden from them and silent, but when they saw him in his armor, sitting on his war horse, their hearts bounded as never before, and the camp at Egbert's Stone resounded continually with their cheers.

He marched on the following day, leading his host with the little army of trained veterans that he had formed in the forest of Athelney, and a new camp was made at Æglea, on a hill overlooking the valley in which Guthrum's stronghold was situated.

No scouts or skirmishers appeared from Ethandune, and the Saxons rested for a day. They moved down the valley soon

after the next dawn, and as the sun was mounting toward the zenith, Alfred hurled a solid column of picked men upon the Danish camp.

The resistance was strong and fierce, as he expected, and the first wave was thrown back upon its supports. Another compact body was flung into the front line and the battle became a bedlam. In previous wars the Danes had split and scattered the Saxons by striking them with ponderous bodies of shock troops in close order, but now Alfred met them with their own tactics.

Against the counsel of some of his leaders, he insisted on mass attacks, and would permit no deployments. The losses were terrific from the first advance, but he held his front steady and sent in troop after troop of fresh men, drawn from the bountiful supply that his country had yielded him.

Conrad had scarcely seen the king, save at a distance, and Alfred did not know that he was there. The young man's small regiment was attached to a division of Cornish and Devon men, and he was merely a captain in the line.

He and his men went forward when Guthrum's earthworks were piled high with Danish and Saxon dead, and the new wave surged over the breastworks and into the outer fortifications of the camp that the Viking had called impregnable.

The men of both armies fought shoulder to shoulder, and wherever a sword fell it found its billet in flesh. The Saxons were pressed back as before, but another wave rolled in behind them, sending them forward again, many to instant death on spear-points and swords.

Conrad held his men together, cheering them with word and example, while heeding the commands of the officers of his division. His eyes were on the enemy before him, and he saw men that he remembered from the thrilling night when he and Alfred had played the parts of minstrels.

At last, and somewhat to his astonishment, he caught sight of Waldher. The Saxon renegade was playing his unworthy part to the end, fighting in the Danish line against the men of his own blood.

Conrad's men were hurled forward in another rush, and in the mêlée the young man struggled to get at Waldher, to know the satisfaction of dealing with him as he deserved. Waldher saw him presently and waved him a defiant challenge with his sword.

Both of them strove to come within reach of each other, but repeatedly they were thrust farther apart. Waldher disappeared, and Conrad feared that he was slain by another hand, but in a moment he saw him again, and with a loud cry he climbed over the heads and shoulders of his comrades and fought frantically to get near him.

The Saxon men witnessed the frenzy of their young captain with amazement and admiration. They were savage enough to wreak fearful execution on the enemy, but they saw the youth fling himself over living parapets, apparently not satisfied with the carnage round about him. He was plainly fighting to pass beyond the Danish front, they guessed, that he might meet Guthrum himself and slay him.

Presently Conrad succeeded far too well for his own good. He pitched over the enemy's line and stood alone among the foemen. They turned in fury to rend him in pieces, but he was away from them at a bound and after Waldher.

The renegade cleared himself from the whirlpool of battle and rushed to meet his ardent enemy. They shouted at each other, savage defiance and a note of joy in their voices. Their blades clashed and sparks flew from the steel.

But Waldher fell back a pace and uttered a shrill cry. Conrad stared hard at him, and as the man reeled on his feet and turned about, he saw an arrow sticking in his back.

Waldher fell, and the battle swept over him. Conrad was cheated of his game, and he turned on the Danes to punish them for his loss. The Saxons saw him fighting alone, and they raised new cries and dashed over human barriers to stand at his side.

Fresh cohorts swept after them, and soon the center of the conflict was in the heart of Guthrum's camp. Now the Danes were falling steadily backward, and a great body of them was seen retiring from the action

and moving to the hill, where the Viking had his strongest fortification and arsenal.

Alfred hurled forward his main supports and the charge went through the camp and up the hill. The Danes cast themselves into their own intrenchments, seeking vainly for shelter, and hundreds were slaughtered in the trap.

Guthrum abandoned the field and retired with a remnant of his army to Bratton Castle, and Alfred set strong guards to watch him, and ordered his heroic and victorious Saxons to make a new camp and rest upon their glory.

The strongest army of Danes that Britain had known was almost annihilated, and their crafty king was a prisoner in his own castle.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRONGER VOICE.

IN the new camp of the victors Conrad rested with his men, and listened in wonderment to their laudations. No more than half of his original force survived, but they denied themselves all credit for their part in the triumph, and repeatedly declared that their young leader routed the Danes single-handed.

Early next day a Saxon officer came to find the captain who had been the first man to penetrate the enemy's strong line, and at his stern command Conrad was forced to go with him to the pavilion of the king.

Alfred had heard much of the achievement of the single man, and he waited anxiously to greet him, but when he saw the hero's face he threw up his arms and uttered a cry of amazement.

Conrad solemnly paid homage to the conqueror, and was confused when he took him in his arms as a father might take a son.

"Conrad!" gasped the king. "The man who could not abide our barren land! Were there no ships upon the sea? Tell me quickly, did you but tarry to drive the Dane from our wilderness? Well, Conrad, we cannot hold you here if Rome still calls so loudly, but we shall send you forth with British laurels on your brow,

and you shall be called a Saxon thane by those you leave behind you here."

He took his hand and drew him within the royal pavilion, and there the young man saw the queen and the Lady Edith standing with the company of courtiers and household officers.

Edith had been dressed by the queen in robes appropriate to her dignity as one of the royal household, and Conrad halted and stared hard as he beheld her, pale and anxious, but superb in her proud carriage and never lovelier in all his memory of her.

"Conrad!" she cried sharply, as she caught sight of him.

She staggered and almost fell, but recovered herself bravely and threw herself into his arms, before the throng of curious strangers.

"Hear me, Conrad," she said earnestly, looking into his eyes: "I know not what brought you back, but I made a vow that if ever I saw your face again, I would beg your forgiveness and follow you to the end of the world, if it pleased you to take me there."

"Conrad shall take you to his city of

Constantinople in a royal ship," said the king happily. "He came back to rid us of our plague of heathen Danes. We dared to think last night that the Saxon arms had conquered Guthrum and his savage hordes, but all the soldiers of the army will tell you that it was Conrad who scaled the breastworks and routed the Danes by the fury of his charge.

"Now we can ask no more of such a hero and deliverer, but he shall go from us with a British title of nobility, and it is my dearest wish that he may take one of our fairest maidens with him."

"There were no ships to take me over the sea, your majesty," said Conrad. "I came back because—because I found I had faith in the Saxons and their king—because the Saxon voice within me cried out louder than the Roman. My heart cried out, too, that my home was here, so—I came back. Now, my liege, I have fought for the Saxons and called myself a Saxon; I am baptized in Saxon blood, and here is my own country and my home. Give me leave to stay, to serve my king, and to make a home in Britain for my love."

THE END



SONNET OF A SHOEMAKER

FOR fifty years I've pounded nails in shoes
 And sent them forth to walk the world again,
 I've mended soles—I, who have none to lose,
 Long years ago it left this dingy pen;
 For souls must feed on color, music, dreams—
 Mine starved on tough brown leather and the tap,
 Tap, tap of hammer, till it sometimes seems
 The very life of me must shortly snap.

A dozen pairs a day for fifty years!
 How many men have trod upon my life,
 Gone out to greet earth's plaudits and its jeers,
 Marched to the music of Fate's drum and fife?
 I've often wondered just why I did choose
 To nail my soul to uppers—damn the shoes!

E. Leslie Spaulding.



Pick Your Own Moral

By GORDON STILES

FUNNY, isn't it—how bright and smiling the world will be one minute, and a perfect hell of a place the next? That was what Billy Carter thought as he stuffed the notes which represented his final pay from the Ironclad Hardware Company into his pocket and made his way out into Fourth Avenue.

He had only himself to blame; he was well aware of that. It was that damned temper of his, he reflected gloomily. It had got him into trouble more than once.

But this was the limit! He would not mind if it were not for Una. Una! Her face rose swiftly before him. He could see her going happily about her work in their little flat up in the Dyckman section, quite unaware that her husband had lost his job fifteen minutes earlier!

The vision caused Billy to grit his teeth and viciously curse Thomas J. Bitt, the slave-driving manager of the Ironclad Company.

Again Billy lived over the swift and hectic events of the morning. He had come to his duties as head of the export invoice department, quite as usual. If anything he had been in a more than ordinarily amiable frame of mind.

His work was well in hand and things at home were running as smoothly as they do in most homes where the budget has to be rather neatly balanced. His married life of just over a year's duration had proved to him that Una was the finest and sweetest and best girl in the world. The machinery of life was singing with a pleasant rhythm, and all was well.

Then Billy had to go and throw the monkey wrench!

Thomas J. Bitt, it must be said in fairness to Billy, was regarded as a hard boiled egg by his employees. Still, all of them, Billy included, had been prone to allow for that.

Doubtless it had been harder for young

Carter than for most of the others, because of his violent temper—a temper that flared up into an angry flame on astonishingly slight provocation.

And this morning, Thomas J. Bitt had been more ornery than ever. He had greeted Billy with: "Why haven't those invoices gone to Maracaibo?"

"I've been waiting for the prices?"

"I gave you the prices long ago."

Billy felt the blood start for his temples, but he hung on and replied: "You told me to hold up the invoices until Searle gave me the figures."

"Oh, I did? Well, why didn't you get them from Searle?"

"He was supposed to give them to me. You didn't tell me to go to him for them."

"Oh—that's the way it goes! He was supposed—you were supposed—what in hell have you got a head for? You're all alike—the whole bunch of you! Passing the buck! Well, suppose you stir up those scrambled brains of yours, if any, and—"

Out of the devastating wave of rage that swept him off his feet, Billy roared: "Suppose you go to hell! You miserable idiot! If I didn't have more brains than you I'd go shoot them out! I—"

At that point Thomas J. Bitt recovered sufficiently to bellow: "You're fired! Get your pay and get out! Quick!"

"You beat me to it, you damned old skunk!" Billy shouted. "I wouldn't be caught breathing the same air as you!"

He whirled on his heel and slammed out.

For a few moments, after he reached the street, Billy stood idly on the edge of the curb, still too excited to think clearly. But gradually his brain cleared, and he began to take mental stock of matters as they stood.

In his pocket were sixty-one dollars, including what he had drawn that morning. In the bank was the pitiful sum of twelve dollars and forty cents; he and Una had checked it over the night before.

Fortunately, the monthly rent of sixty-five dollars had been paid two days earlier; their floating bills amounted to very little. But there would be a twenty-five dollar installment due on the furniture next week.

Not a brave showing, but Billy reck-

oned he could land something with a rival concern without much trouble. The first step was to go home and tell Una about the fireworks.

II.

DURING the journey uptown in the subway, Billy discovered that the irritation caused by his interview with Thomas J. Bitt still lingered. As he emerged at the Grand Central to transfer to the Broadway line, an over eager stout gentleman plumped straight into him, and Billy snapped: "Can't you look where you're going, you damned walrus?"

The puffing party of the second part turned and growled an insult over his shoulder which caused Billy to rush at him like a rattled pugilist. But the door closed on his annoyer, and that was that.

Billy calmed down on the train—in a measure. The business of breaking the news to Una was a bit sobering.

Nevertheless, he found himself bawling out the elevator man for carrying on a prolonged conversation with a delivery boy and keeping the lift waiting. Yes, indeed, by the time Billy let himself into the apartment the world had resolved itself into a most horrible mess!

Una took the tidings bravely, although there was trouble in her eyes when Billy told her of how he had flared up. In fact, she was so sweet and uncomplaining that a wave of contrition swept over her young husband. This was coupled with a fierce secret determination to land a new job immediately, to show Una that he could make up for his failings by digging up a better place than the one he had lost!

He said: "Oh, I'll come out all right, Una."

She said: "I know you will, dear. Of course you will!"

But he could see that while she refrained from saying so, she did wish that he could control that tempestuous streak in his make-up a little better. Well—he meant to.

The thought of Una suffering through his faults brought a lump into his throat. He took her in his arms and murmured: "I guess I was a fool, all right."

With the perverseness that belongs to woman, she swung to his defense.

"No! No! I wouldn't have you stand that sort of talk from anybody! I don't care who he is! You'll get another job, and show old Bitt where he gets off! It'll be fun, having lunch at home. Won't it?"

She kissed him and sped into the tiny kitchen.

III.

NEXT morning Billy started out, hammering at the portals of other wholesale hardware concerns. The first two or three turn-downs did not discourage him. He was more or less of a specialist, having devoted most of his experience to the export end of the business.

But, as the list of his calls lengthened, he began to wonder if, after all, landing a new berth would be as easy as they had thought.

The answer to that came when a whole week had passed and nothing had turned up. There were nightly consultations and much scanning of the help wanted advertisements and a terrific amount of letter writing.

The payment to the furniture company was made, and the small stock of money dwindled alarmingly. Something had to happen.

And with every disappointment, Billy's rage against Thomas J. Bitt grew apace. He even had wild ideas of striding into that party's office and shooting him.

In this connection, he conjured up a most dramatic scene. He would walk in, cover Thomas J. Bitt with a gun, and proceed to tell him what he was! He could picture Bitt's terror stricken face as he listened to the fearful arraignment! Then, when it was all over, the gun would speak, and each bullet, as it found a mark in the body of Billy's enemy, would be accompanied by a curse!

After that it didn't matter what happened! If they sent him to the chair, Una would have his life insurance; the policy was incontestable! Bah!

It was on the heels of one of these emotional orgies that Billy called at the office of the South Pole Trading Company,

where, he had been told, there was an opening for a good export man. This, on the whole, was the most promising lead that had turned up.

The man to see, Billy understood, was Morton Bishop, vice president. Thus, when he entered the reception room, Billy asked the extraordinarily fresh appearing office boy to take his name to Mr. Bishop.

"Whadya wanta see him about?" demanded the youngster.

Billy's annoyance rose instantly. "You just take in my name. I'll tell him what it's about."

"Nothin' doin'—unless ya tell me what it's about." The youth leered impudently into Billy's face.

"You tell Mr. Bishop that Mr. Carter wants to see him!" blustered Billy.

Whereupon the office boy quietly ignored him, thereby adding in no small measure to Billy's anger. The latter realized that it was the office boy's round—as it always is in such cases—and decided to proceed along other lines. To which end he marched indignantly out of the place and sought a telephone booth.

Calling the South Pole Trading Company, Billy asked to speak to Mr. Bishop. The girl operator inquired: "Who is speaking?"

"I'll tell him that, if you don't mind," Billy replied.

The girl said, "Just a moment," and after a delay another feminine voice asked: "What is it, please?"

"I would like to speak to Mr. Bishop," Billy answered, controlling his annoyance with an effort.

"What is the name, please?"

To avoid argument, the young man told her, "Mr. Carter—Mr. William Carter."

"And what did you wish to speak to him about?"

"I'll explain that to him if you'll put him on the wire." With swift rising anger, he added: "I'm not in the habit of relaying my business through half a dozen others. Will you put Mr. Bishop on the wire or not?"

He could feel the girl hesitate. Then she said: "Wait a moment, please."

A long interval, during which Billy

fumed in the narrow booth. Then a man's voice said: "Yes. What is it?"

"Is that Mr. Bishop?"

"This is Mr. Jobson, Mr. Bishop's private secretary."

"I would like to speak to Mr. Bishop."

"What is your name, please?"

"Look here! I've given my name two or three times already, and I'm damned if I'm going to give it again! I want to talk to Mr. Bishop, and if there's any reason why I can't, just say so!"

"What is the nature of your business with Mr. Bishop?"

"Do you mean to say I have to go over all that with you first?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Bishop is a very busy man and—I can't put you on his wire unless I know what it's about."

Billy exploded: "Well, there's one thing you *can* do! You can go to hell!" He slammed up the receiver and made a break for the open air.

"I don't care a damn!" he muttered as he mopped his brow and strove to recover from his telephonic bout. "Make a fellow give his life's history to everybody from the janitor up! The devil with them!" But he felt vaguely uneasy about telling Una of this latest flare.

He did tell her, though. And was not altogether surprised when she said, in a half joking tone: "My big he-man will have to do something about that temper of his, I'm afraid." And he felt more chastened than if she had taken him seriously to task.

IV.

THREE weeks and no nearer a place than on the day he had walked out of the Iron-clad offices! The situation was growing desperate, which added to Billy's mental turmoil not a little. In a few days the rent would be due, and likewise the slender bank roll would be exhausted!

Four firms had been visited that morning and no hope had been held out. Billy moved languidly along Fourth Avenue, hating everybody who passed him.

Why, these people had jobs! They were working and receiving a weekly envelope. What dumb-bells some of them looked!

As if he were not a better man than any of them!

Yet—here he was, broke, jobless, and facing he did not know what! A sweet situation!

In this frame of mind he found himself scowling up at the entrance of the Iron-clad Hardware Company. Not only that, but, as he looked, down the steps came Mr. Thomas J. Bitt! Thomas J. Bitt, looking more forbidding than ever!

Then something snapped! If all the rages in which Billy Carter had ever indulged could have been rolled together into one monster blast of hatred, this was it!

That last interview, the weeks of heart-breaking effort, the silent endurance of Una and now—the hateful presence of Thomas J. Bitt! All reared themselves into the materials for an offensive the like of which Hindenburg never dreamed!

There was no rime or reason in what Billy did, but he was only the tool of the madness that gripped his soul. He sprang at Thomas J. Bitt like a wounded tiger!

Smash! Billy's right plumped into the other's jaw! The man had seen it coming! No words were necessary, and none were spoken.

Bitt was a bigger man, but his sedentary life had not served to keep him in trim. Yet he had a considerable brute strength and was not the person to take it "lying down."

He recovered instantly from the impact of Billy's first blow and countered with a vicious swing to the young man's jaw. Billy ducked and himself delivered a swing that went wild. Then they closed upon each other, and all rules went by the board.

Heedless of the mighty crowd that assembled in a twinkling, they pummeled and kicked and gouged. Bitt landed heavily on Billy's right eye, and the latter repeatedly drew blood from his opponent's battered mouth.

But the struggle weakened the heavier man so that just as the police broke through the delighted crowd, a smashing uppercut from Billy's right laid Bitt out cold! He lay where he had fallen and his conqueror swung around to find himself gripped by the hands of two bluecoats who, in spite of

their majesty, secretly regretted not having witnessed the whole show.

Bitt was helped to his feet, cursing and mopping his bleeding face with a handkerchief.

"He attacked me, assaulted me," he told the policemen, in a thick voice. "I'll make a complaint."

"You'll have to come along," the officer told Billy. And through a lane which other police forced the party went, to the station house around the corner.

By this time Billy was subdued. Led before the long desk, subjected to a fire of questions, he knew at last the possibilities lurking in that temper of his.

As in a dream, he heard the officers tell their stories, heard the desk sergeant ask Bitt if he would sign the complaint! Then he found himself in a cell awaiting the arrival of a patrol wagon to take him to court for arraignment! It was a horrible nightmare!

The bail, he understood, had been fixed at one thousand dollars. It might as well be a million. And if he should get off with a fine, he would not have the money to pay it!

Jail! That was what he faced. Ah, here they came now, to take him before the magistrate!

"Come along," the guard told him and led him back into the room where the long desk was.

To Billy's surprise, the captain was grinning down at him. And to his utter astonishment, that official said: "You've been bailed out!"

"Bailed out!" Billy exclaimed. "Who did it?"

"This gentleman," the captain replied, and handed over a card. "He wants you to wash your face and go to his office at once."

The amazed Billy read:

AMBROSE KELSEY
President Ironclad Hardware Company
New York City, U. S. A.

Ambrose Kelsey! Head of the company! Whom Billy had scarcely spoken to a dozen times and who was guarded from the other employees by Bitt as a mother lion guards her young! What did it all mean?

However, he made for a barber shop and, a half hour later, presented himself at the office. The boy in attendance grinned in recognition.

"Mr. Kelsey said you were to go right in."

Seated in the chair to which the president had waved him, Billy heard with incredulous ears:

"I saw the whole show, Carter. And, believe me, if a man ever deserved to be busted a few, it was one T. J. Bitt! I had just fired him when he ran afoul of you and you gave him what I have wanted to for a long time! This office will be a sweeter place without him!

"But this charge he has made against me—"

"Tut, tut! I'll see that he withdraws that. I'm in a position to talk turkey to that lad. Never mind the reasons. But—I am making the manager of the export department general manager, and if you think you'd like to try out the job he leaves, why—"

"Try it out! Why, Mr. Kelsey, I'll—I'll—"

"Yes. I know you will. And about the old temper, now. You'll hold it down a bit, what?"

"I've got my foot on it right now," Billy told him.

THE END

BLAZING THE TRAIL

This is what ARGOSY did. In October, 1896, it came out as the first all-fiction magazine in the world. It has had a host of imitators, but keeps in the forefront of them all, giving the greatest value in live, wide awake stories to be found anywhere.



Married and Broke

By JACK BECHDOLT

BRAD HARPER, reaching negligently for his billfold and the money necessary to pay a marrying magistrate's fee, realized two things in the same instant of time: He was married; he was broke.

The girl whose hand rested so trustingly upon his strong left arm, whose pretty face turning up to his glowed like a flower, no longer was Alicia Huggins, late cashier of the Bijou movie theater at High Center, but Mrs. Bradley Harper. That was important fact number one.

Important fact number two, which dawned upon him as news of staggering weight, was the recollection that he had left all the hand baggage belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Harper in the taxi which had carried them post haste from the train to the marriage license bureau—and in one of those bags was packed his spare clothing and the billfold that contained six hundred dollars, all the money he and Alicia had.

Not only was their money in the bag, but what seemed an even more appalling loss, the precious letter of introduction which Brad Harper counted upon to land him a job with the Jerome Marcy Company. It was exactly as though an ironic fate had smoothed their way to the altar in order to strand them, helpless, unvouched-for strangers in the heart of the great city.

Brad gasped audibly and his freckled face paled, but he gave no further sign of his loss while the magistrate's clerk awaited the fee, lest he disgrace Alicia before strangers. Fortunately, he had thrust a few single dollar bills into his trousers pocket and could, at least, pay for the privilege of writing "Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Harper" upon a hotel register—only providing he ever again had the wherewithal to pay a hotel bill.

Alicia, clinging trustingly to his arm, Brad led the way into the open air and

sunshine and across the small park before the City Hall to a convenient bench. There seated, Brad confided rapidly the misfortune that had befallen them.

It was just three months before this fatal day that Alicia Huggins had first appeared at the Bijou movie theater ticket window. Brad Harper, wandering in for the second show lost all interest in movies when he peered through the wicket into Alicia's eyes.

Brad's acquaintance with the manager of the Bijou made an introduction to Alicia possible and in a short time Brad Harper and Alicia Huggins knew that they were in love.

Two events determined Brad to sell out his small general store in High Center and choose the great city as the home of himself and his bride-to-be. He was offered a reasonable sum for his small business and almost simultaneously he met an affable capitalist from New York who roused in him soaring ambitions.

The capitalist was named Colonel Miller Hale Connaught. He made one or two small purchases at Brad's store and became acquainted with its proprietor.

"You run this place mighty efficiently," Colonel Connaught said one morning, the last day of his stay in High Center. "You're a young fellow with ideas, Harper. Why, anybody looking at your window display of cravats would recognize the real New York touch! And those ads you carry in the *Weekly Advocate*! You tell me you write your own copy? Boy, you belong in the big town!"

"Sure," Brad grinned, "a lot of fellows like me feel that way. But they tell me it's pretty tough going for a stranger to break into big business in the city."

"Not your kind of a stranger," the colonel assured him. "Not a man with ideas like yours! Why, Harper, my friend Jerome Marcy would jump at the chance of hiring a man like you if he could know you as I do."

Brad gasped, awed by the name of a manufacturer known wherever modern merchandising methods have reached. But the colonel assured him rapidly that no less a man than Jerome Marcy was constantly on the lookout for young men of Brad

Harper's type, men who could fill executive positions in his organization and furthermore the colonel volunteered on the spot to give Brad a personal note of introduction to Marcy.

The colonel was back with the note within half an hour and when Brad read it over he certainly had every reason to believe that Jerome Marcy would think highly of the bearer's ability as a man of ideas and forceful personality.

After that it was no inconvenience at all for Brad to cash one of the colonel's checks and thus make it possible for that busy man to save a few hours in the crowded schedule of his travel.

Fortified with the money realized from the sale of his business and armed with the colonel's letter of introduction to Marcy, Brad persuaded Alicia that their future lay in the metropolis. Within twenty-four hours they were on a train headed toward New York, and matrimony.

And now they were married—married and stranded.

There was no getting away from the fact that, in the excitement of the most momentous event in their lives, Brad and Alicia had left their two bags in the taxi and in Brad's bag was Brad's billfold, placed there the better to keep safe the precious six hundred dollars which was his sole capital in life—a part of which was to be devoted to a thoroughly delightful and impractical honeymoon before Brad accepted the position he would surely find with Jerome Marcy.

"But, Brad!" Alicia gasped, tears in her blue eyes. "What are we going to do about it?"

That was the first time in his life that Brad Harper realized the responsibilities of marriage. After this he must think for two. He thought.

"We'll tell a cop," he decided. A patrolman was in sight at the nearest crossing, and Brad and bride went to him.

"In a taxi?" the cop echoed. "What kind? Yellow? Black and White? Pleasure cab? Autocar? Luxury, Luxor, Paramount, Premier, or Popular? Checker, Checkerboard, Chalmers or Chelsea? Packard, Parker, Princetonian or—"

The cop might have gone on endlessly, but Brad shook his head. "Gosh, I don't know! It was just a taxicab to me. I was in a rush to get married—"

"What was the license number of said cab?"

"I don't know that—"

"Or the driver's hack license number? The number posted on the police card in plain view of passengers of said vehicle—"

Brad shook his head again. "I never even thought to look at it. You see, we were just getting married—"

"I guess you'd better go around to Center Street," the cop said kindly. "Ask for the lost property bureau. Sometimes an honest cab driver will turn in property to be claimed—if it isn't too valuable. Of course if it was ready money, now—"

"There was six hundred dollars in one bag," Brad sighed.

"Well," said the cop, pursing his lips doubtfully, "better report it, anyhow. You never can tell, but—"

At the proper desk of the proper bureau the loss of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Harper was duly entered on proper forms.

"Better keep in touch with us once in awhile," said a police clerk. "You never can tell."

"No," Brad said sadly as he led his bride back into the light of day, "and what's more, you never can tell how we're going to find a place to lay our heads to-night—or even eat! Some wedding day—"

"Brad! Haven't we still got each other?" Alicia demanded. "I could stand anything but losing you, and if you can't stand anything but losing me—"

"I can," Brad said promptly. "And you're right. So long as I've got you, nothing else matters. And now—I'll do something about it."

In the midst of a busy street and regardless of audience or traffic Brad kissed his newly made bride, tucked her hand under his arm and started off with the firm, purposeful step of the wonder-man Alicia expected him to be.

"Where to, Brad?" Alicia gasped, skipping to keep up with his long stride.

"To the office of Jerome Marcy," Brad answered firmly. "I didn't mean to call for

a week or ten days, but now I need that job. Letter or no letter, I'm going after it. I want that job to-day!"

II.

IN the big, busy offices of the Jerome Marcy Company, Brad was shunted from information desk to a cool, efficient, gray-haired woman, Mr. Marcy's secretary. To her he explained again that he wished to see Mr. Marcy personally.

"If it is about employment with the firm I would suggest the personnel department," the secretary smiled. "That would save your time—and Mr. Marcy's."

"It's a personal matter," Brad explained, equally firm if not quite so collected.

No personnel department for him! He was going to see Marcy or know the reason why. He wrote his name in bold hand on a form slip and added below: "Introduced by Colonel Miller Hale Connaught."

Brad wished devoutly he had not lost that precious letter. He had no difficulty at all recalling it in complete detail.

Colonel Connaught had started out: "My dear old Jerry." That was the sort of friends he and Jerome Marcy were, close as ninety-nine and one hundred.

"My dear old Jerry," Colonel Connaught had said, "this will be handed to you in person by a young and very dear friend of mine, Mr. Bradley Harper. Brad Harper is calling on you at my own earnest solicitation, and I am confident that fifteen minutes' conversation with him will convince you that you cannot afford to let him walk out of your office until you have his name on the dotted line of a contract. If I am anything, Jerry, I'm a judge of men, and when I say that of all the young fellows I have sent your way to fill executive positions in your organization, Harper is by far the most promising, I am staking my reputation on those words!"

The letter went on in that vein. Brad could remember it all right, but there was not room to write it on the slip under his name. It didn't seem to him there would be much use even in reciting it to Marcy. But somehow he must make Marcy believe in him.

The secretary returned with a smile, and Brad's heart leaped with pleasant anticipations.

"Mr. Marcy will be glad to see you to-morrow morning, Mr. Harper. He regrets that he is busy every minute of to-day."

Brad lingered desperately. "It's very important that I see him to-day. Very important—to me—"

"That is quite out of the question. To-morrow morning."

Brad knew when he was beaten. He went away consoling himself that, at least, Colonel Connaught's name had worked the magic he expected of it. Marcy had been impressed; Marcy would see him in the morning; undoubtedly Marcy would offer him something good. And meantime—well, the bags and the money might even now be awaiting him at police headquarters!

Brad's report to Alicia was colored in this optimistic vein. They took stock of their resources. With what was in Alicia's little purse and the odd change in Brad's pocket they had three dollars.

"If I had anything to pawn now," Brad told her. "A fine gold watch, or something—only I haven't. And I don't know any place to borrow, either—except Mr. Marcy. Of course he'll fix it all up, as soon as I can explain to him—"

"I haven't even any relatives to wire to," Alicia replied.

"I'm glad of it," Brad said stoutly. "I don't like borrowing money from anybody. Anyway, we've got each other—and we'll make out. Why, by to-night I'll bet that taxi driver will have turned in our bags. Meantime—"

"Meantime," Alicia chimed in, "we'll be very careful—"

"But not too careful," Brad grinned. "We'll have lunch. It's our wedding day, isn't it?"

Careful as they were, lunch cost one dollar and ten cents.

"I could look for a job this afternoon," Alicia remarked, surveying the remainder of their fortune.

"Never, on your wedding day!" said her husband. "We'll see the big town, Alicia. Walking can't cost us anything."

Alicia demurred. "It seems a risk, Brad. Maybe we'd both better look for jobs right now. If—if the bags—"

Alicia saw the stubborn set to her husband's jaw. For the first time in her life she knew married responsibilities. Evidently there were times when Brad must be humored, and this was one.

"Very well, dear," she said, and tucked her hand under his arm.

They walked and saw the wonders of the great city. They saw skyscrapers, cañon-like streets, the harbor, and the shipping, the bridges, and the marvelous skyline of Manhattan; they saw quaint old houses, relics of village days; the crowded tenement districts, their narrow streets blocked with pushcarts where humanity swarmed and haggled and quarreled and laughed and made love without shame; they saw the marvels of shop windows, and the humors of Greenwich Village dens. And always Alicia saw the most wonderful sight of all—Brad, her new husband, beside her; and Brad saw Alicia. It was a wonderful honeymoon.

They grew desperately tired, and rested on a bench in a public square, and discovered they were frightfully hungry. They dined in the most inexpensive-looking place, and a dollar and a half more of their total fortune vanished.

Alicia looked at the pitiful remnant of change.

"Oh, Brad," she cried, "we shouldn't have been so extravagant. We both should have looked for work to-day—"

"Alicia," said Brad, "if a man can't be extravagant on his wedding day, he's a born tightwad. I'm glad we wasted our time. And anyhow, the bags are sure to be returned to police headquarters by now. Come on, we've got subway fare left."

The bags had not been returned. Brad and Alicia went forth and found a small East Side park, and sat on a bench until late. They returned to Center Street and inquired again. The bags had not been found.

In the street Alicia clung desperately to her husband's arm. "What shall we do? We won't have a roof over our heads! Oh, Brad—"

"Wait," Brad bade her. "I'll go back and ask a cop."

Such a story was not unknown to the police.

Brad was told by a kindly faced sergeant: "The matron can get your wife into one of the women's aid homes, but naturally she can't register you with her there. As for you, that quarter will pay for your bed all right, but it won't be in any hotel where you can register your wife. Sorry to separate you folks, but I guess it's the best you can do about it."

Brad carried the news to Alicia.

"Be brave, dear; it's only for to-night. To-morrow, as soon as I see Marcy, and he knows I'm Colonel Connaught's friend—Oh, Alicia!"

He gathered his bride into his arms and held her thus silent, close, for a long time.

"It's only until to-morrow, Brad," Alicia smiled wanly at last.

"Only until to-morrow," Brad echoed, grimly cheerful. "I'll land Marcy to-morrow."

III.

BRAD'S fingers polished a lonely nickel when he met Alicia as by previous appointment in Madison Square early next morning.

His first words were: "Had your breakfast?"

"Had a wonderful breakfast—at the hotel. They give one to every woman who stops there," Alicia reported.

And she looked it. Somehow, no matter how lonely or how fearful Alicia had been through the long night of her separation from Brad, she looked glowing and utterly delightful now.

Brad beamed back on her. "I guess I can blow myself to a cup of coffee, then. There's a coffeepot lunch just across the street—"

"I guess they wouldn't mind if I sat and watched you drink it," Alicia suggested shyly. She added: "Provided I can stand the sight of any more food."

"Now for Marcy and a job," Brad announced when he had downed the coffee.

"And I begin looking for my own job," Alicia announced, equally firm.

"Alicia, I don't exactly like the idea—"

"You'll have to like it, Brad. That was our last nickel you spent. And if our bags aren't returned—"

"There's always Marcy," Brad insisted.

"I'll look for a job," said his practical wife. "I'll meet you in this same place at noon."

Brad was first on the appointed spot. Though he tried to grin widely when Alicia came into view, his face ached with the effort.

"Marcy was called out of town this morning," he reported. "Had to cancel all appointments. But things aren't so bad. His secretary's taken a liking to me, and she gave me a private tip. He'll be in his office just after five to-day. I'll see him, or break my leg trying. Find a job, dearest?"

It was Alicia's turn to beam cheerfully. "Well, not yet. But I'm bound to this afternoon. Do you mind spending noon just sitting here, Brad? I'm a little tired." They spent noon on the bench—together, and forgetting their anxieties.

"I'll walk down town to Center Street," Brad said as they parted. "Those bags ought to be back by this time. See you here at six o'clock, and—don't worry, dear. I'll get an advance from Marcy. I'll make him give me one!"

Alicia was first to reach the bench that evening. She sank into its hard, green embrace with a weary sigh and loosened the straps of her little pumps in order to let her aching feet rest.

Alicia was defeated and terrified. She had walked miles, only to meet rebuffs and disappointments wherever she looked for work. She was not used to city ways, and the employment methods of large corporations where a girl with slight knowledge of making change and a very sketched experience of everything else might hope for work.

But before Brad came she used powder puff and rouge valiantly and hoped that the dark circles of weariness under her eyes would escape his observation.

Brad drooped noticeably. He was too

tired to look for the circles under Alicia's eyes.

"Marcy put me off again," he reported. "Sent out word he couldn't possibly see me to-day. If I could just get a word with him—make him realize that Colonel Connaught sent me—"

"Luck's bound to turn," Alicia insisted. "And, Brad, we've still got each other—"

"No word from our bags, either," Brad went on, after a valiant attempt to appreciate his wife's philosophy. "Gosh, I guess you'll have to go back to that darned home again for the night. Hello! Why, Alicia, why—"

Alicia suddenly had gone limp against his shoulder. Her face was deathly pale; her eyes closed. She was fainting; had fainted.

Brad ran to the public drinking fount, soaked his handkerchief and began to bathe her face. Alicia's eyes opened. She tried to smile. "Just a little—dizzy—and—and hungry, Brad—"

"Look here," Brad accused her angrily, "you lied to me about breakfast—"

"It doesn't matter, dear—"

"They never fed you any breakfast! You let me spend our last nickel on myself."

"But I wasn't a bit hungry. I'm not now, really. Sometimes I get that way, honest."

"You sit right here," Brad said sternly. "Right here until I come back." He rose, white and grim.

Alicia waited two hours, two long, terrified hours for him. Brad came back with some of the old swagger in his step.

"We eat, first," he announced.

He led Alicia to the nearest restaurant, ordered for her, saw that she ate and ate a little himself. Alicia saw him break a five-dollar bill to pay for this feast.

"How did you do it?" she gasped.

"Got a job. Now for a hotel for you. No more of those charity institutions! They tell me the Martha Washington is best for women who are alone—"

"Alone? Oh, Brad, again."

"Again," Brad answered grimly. "I got a job with a truckman. Helping him with deliveries. And I talked him out of my pay in advance."

"But why can't we be together? Oh, Brad—"

"Because," Brad answered grimly, "I work all night. Of all the jobs I might have landed, that's the one I had to get. Can you beat it! But honest, hon, it's only until to-morrow. Be brave, Alicia. To-morrow—"

IV.

BRAD looked tired but cheerful and determined when he met Alicia next morning. "I hope there's enough change of that five left for us to get breakfast, Alicia? I'm starved."

"Oh, there is, Brad!"

"Things aren't so bad, really. I can work again to-night. The boss truckman said so. But I don't have to. I'll land Marcy to-day. Honest, Alicia, I think we've been married long enough to settle in a little furnished room of our own, don't you?"

Alicia answered, regardless of publicity, by rubbing her cheek against Brad's shoulder.

"We start a home life together to-day or I'll know the reason why," Brad vowed sternly.

After breakfast Brad felt so cheerful he could make a small joke. "Look, Alicia, they've hung Fifth Avenue with flags. They heard we were in town."

"Silly! I read the papers. That's to welcome Lincoln Carver, the famous aviator. See, there's the grand stand where the mayor's committee will review the parade."

The gray-haired woman, Jerome Marcy's secretary, entered the great man's sanctum, her manner a little anxious. "That young man Harper is out there again, Mr. Marcy."

"No," said Marcy. "Not to-day."

He was snappish about it. Jerome Marcy was still in his early forties and not the kind of a man thoroughly used to wearing a frock coat, gray trousers, spats and a high silk hat. This morning he wore all of these things, and it made him feel self conscious and hence unusually snappish.

"I wish you'd see him," sighed the secre-

lary. "He's so persistent and so—so sort of—"

"About a job, isn't it?"

"He says it's personal, but—yes, I guess he wants a job."

"Personnel department, then. What's the sense of my spending thousands on a personnel department if it can't sift out applicants for a job?"

"But he wants to talk to you, Mr. Marcy! He refused to see the personnel—"

"Listen," said Marcy. "See this tom-fool coat and circus hat? See those spats? See the gardenia in my buttonhole? Do I look like a bridegroom, or don't I?"

"You look wonderful," said his tactful secretary.

"Yeah? Well, I wouldn't dress up like a trick horse except I've got to go serve on the mayor's committee. And the only reason I'm doing that is I want a good seat where I can see this new ace, Carver, right close up. And that committee is going to give me enough to do for one day without interviewing any Mr. Harper from Hiram Center or whatever he calls it, and you can tell him so.

"And, furthermore, to-day's Friday and I'm out of town for the week-end. - And Monday I sail for Europe for two months, as you very well know. And anyhow, we don't need any more help in this organization until fall—not his kind of help. Suppose you tell your friend all that, Miss Blythe, and maybe he'll see a great light and go away. As for me, I'm going right now. I'm late as it is."

V.

ALICIA was waiting for Brad when he came out of the offices of the Jerome Marcy Company.

"I hurried right over here," she explained, a strange light in her eyes. "Brad, I got a job."

"You did!"

"Yes, and I've got to decide about it by one o'clock to-day. Brad, it's a job out of town. I—it means we would be separated for all of two months—and I've got to go to-day. It's secretarial work for a woman lecturer. Oh, Brad, what shall we do?"

Brad was about to say, peremptorily, "Refuse it." Then he glanced at Alicia more thoughtfully.

Was it right, was it fair to subject his wife to this? Alicia had married him expecting protection and a husband. So far she had had very little of either. She looked tired, worried.

Alicia had a right to her own life, and if he could offer her neither a home nor protection what right had he to dictate her actions.

Brad was about to admit as much to his wife, but his thoughts changed again. He loved Alicia; he needed her so!

He looked hurriedly at a street clock. Its hands indicated the near approach of eleven.

"One o'clock you say, Alicia?"

"One sharp. What shall I say, Brad?"

"Meet me in the park at twelve thirty," said Brad. "Good-by, dear."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to interview Jerome Marcy," Brad said through clenched teeth. "He's in a grand stand with a lot of other high silk hats and stuffed shirts. Maybe he thinks he's got rid of me. Well, he hasn't. Twelve-thirty, Alicia."

Brad was gone. Alicia watched him hurry off. Her hands clasped anxiously.

"If he just hadn't lost that wonderful letter!" she mourned. "Find him, Brad! Make him listen to you—oh, I hope you can!"

VI.

ABOUT the official grand stand from which the mayor's committee of welcome would review the parade and pay their respects to Lincoln Carver, the aviator hero of the day, a dense crowd had assembled.

The packed throng pressed close to the line established by a cordon of soldiery, good-natured but firm policemen. None but a desperate man could have fought his way through to the bluecoats, but Brad was desperate now.

"I've got to see Jerome Marcy—and he's in that grand stand," he explained to a policeman.

A shrewd eye surveyed Brad Harper in his unassuming gray summer suit and straw

hat. A strong arm pushed him away good-humoredly. "Not a chance, buddy. Move on."

Brad moved on to the next policeman and explained himself in desperate earnestness.

"Naw," said the cop. "Not if you was the mayor himself. Hey, stand aside and let the gentlemen through, will ya?"

The crowd eddied, and Brad was pushed back unceremoniously. A red-faced patrolman was escorting several silk-hatted, frock-coated dignitaries toward the grand stand.

"Members of the welcome committee," said an awed voice in Brad's ear. "They all gotta wear them silk hats and comedy clothes."

Again Brad fought his way by painful steps to the police line, and again was turned away and shoved back unceremoniously. He was lost, deep in the impatient crowd, lost and despairing. Again he saw a lane opened by the bluecoats and another silk-hatted dignitary pressing forward toward the official reviewing stand.

A weary little man, wedged so closely against Brad that his straw hat was knocked over one eye, groaned up at him: "Look at that! *He* gets a cop to make way for him, and all *we* get is a kick in the shins. I'd give ten dollars right now if I was wearing a stovepipe hat. Hey, whatcha tryin', fella? You going cuckoo?"

Brad acted for the moment like a man going mad. Turning about face, he was fighting his way out of the crowd as hard and fast as he recently had fought to get in. Behind him he left a trail of caustic comments and bruised shins and ribs.

Once free of the crowd, he ran toward a passing surface car and swung himself aboard. Ten minutes later Brad was in the office of the truckman who had hired him. Five minutes after that, thanks to the eloquence of desperation, he emerged clutching another five-dollar bill.

A pawnshop was his next port of call. Not thirty minutes, counting from the moment of overhearing that chance remark, Brad Harper, silk-hatted, frock-coated, and desperate, again neared the official viewing stand and made straight for the nearest police officer.

Brad's heart pounded; fear constricted his throat, fear lest the rented and none-too-well-fitting finery should be subjected to close scrutiny. The frock coat bunched about his shoulders, and the silk hat, three sizes too large, threatened momentarily to slip off its resting place upon his ample ears and eclipse his face from view.

But Brad Harper was desperate. For Alicia and married bliss he was staking his all. He thrust out his chest and caught the bluecoat by the arm.

"Officer, get me into the stand. I'm very late," he said sternly. "It's a shame a man's car can't get through on official business!"

Would it work? Could it be possible a hard boiled New York cop could be bluffed thus? It was!

"Yes, sir," said the cop. "Just be after sticking close at my heels, sir. Hey, youse, gangway! One side, you folks! Oh, sergeant, gimme a hand here, will ya?"

In a moment the crowd engulfed them. Then Brad was safe.

What if the silk hat was knocked over one eye now? Pushed by the mob, any dignitary's silk hat loses its pristine glory. Brad Harper looked as much a member of the welcome committee as any late arrivals who had fought their way through that mob.

"Find me Mr. Marcy," Brad said grandly to his own special cop. "I've got to see him at once."

Dutifully the cop inquired. Word passed back among the silk-hatted ranks. Jerome Marcy threaded his way forward, puzzled, curious, feeling a little honored by the attentions of a man who could command special police service of his own on such an occasion.

Marcy peered into a face that was strange to him, rather a youngish, flushed and desperate face. But he was a man who met many distinguished men, and sometimes forgot faces he should remember.

He said: "Ah, yes, Mr.—ah—"

"Mr. Bradley Harper, Mr. Marcy. A close personal friend of Colonel Miller Hale Connaught—and I've got to talk to you this morning—"

"Good Lord!" Marcy gasped. "Not—not the Harper that's been haunting my office? Not the Harper from Hiram Corners—"

"High Center," Brad corrected. "And I'm going to talk to you right now."

Jerome Marcy was grinning. "Son," he said, "I'll talk to you exclusively from now till midnight, if you'll tell me how you got here!"

"Come down here under the grand stand where we can be private," said Brad, "and I will."

It was not midnight, it was scarcely thirty minutes later, when Jerome Marcy had the whole story. He surveyed Bradley Harper with shrewd, appraising eyes.

"You can have a job," he decided. "With your nerve, you deserve one. We'll try you writing advertising copy—"

"I'll need a little ready money, too," Brad gasped.

"You get it," Marcy chuckled. He wrote rapidly on one of his personal cards. "Take that to Miss Blythe. She'll see that you get what you need until next pay day. And now, would you mind telling me

who in Heaven's name is Colonel Miller Hale Connaught, because I never heard his name before in all my life?"

"But he knows you! Why, he's your personal friend. He—" Brad told all he knew about the colonel.

"And you cashed his check, did you, Harper? Check any good?"

"I don't know. I meant to put it through for collection the day I came away to get married—but it got lost with my suitcase."

"Then I'll make you a little bet, my son. The check is no good, and Colonel Whatdoyoucallit Connaught is just a slick crook who goes around distributing letters of introduction to any easy mark that wants one."

And that, as Brad was to learn later, was the truth.

But Brad didn't mind so very much. Thanks to Colonel Miller Hale Connaught, Brad had landed a good job with the Jerome Marcy Company, and also, thanks to the colonel, that day Brad was able to sign upon a hotel register, regardless of expense, "Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Harper."

THE END

INDESTRUCTIBLE

IS that you, Death? Hello, old skate!
 Whatever you do, you have come too late!
 I've had a life brimful of joy—
 Good luck as a man, good luck as a boy.
 It's been all right with me from the first;
 I've had more'n my share, so do your worst!
 You can't take away the suns I've seen
 Go down in the west; or the silver sheen
 Of a starlit lake; or the mating call
 Of a drowsing bird when the shadows fall.
 You can't snatch from me the soft love-light
 Of my mother's eyes, or the blessed sight
 Of a child of mine in his romping play;
 Or my wife's sweet lips at the close of day;
 Or the meals I've had; or the restful sleep;
 Or the joys of health which have thrilled so deep.

I laugh at you, you blamed old skate.
 Whatever you do, you have come too late!

H. Stanley Haskins.

THE READER'S VIEWPOINT

THE letter from Greensboro, below, is the first comment we have had on the Earl Wayland Bowman story. We had meant to ask our readers whether any had noticed something peculiar about the tale, but decided it would be better to let this prose poem come as a surprise. We remind them now that this is the last chance to get in their solutions of the mystery at the root of "The Return of George Washington." Guesses should be mailed not later than November 15. Meanwhile, the Shuberts are considering the story with a view to making a stage production.

GREENSBORO, N. C.

Let me congratulate you. I made a rough guess a few days ago and found I had read about four million words in the last three years. But I have just read something that is entirely new to me. I'd like to know what kind of literature it is.

It is a short story in the *ARGOSY* for October 1, by Earl Wayland Bowman, entitled "As Told by the Ramblin' Kid." It was surely an agreeable surprise. I read it through, and when I had finished, I scratched my head and thought a little, then read it again. Yes, I found what was the matter the second time. It was a real good short story, and then some, but it was poetry, too!

Yes, when I read the darned thing the second time, I found that it rimed from beginning to end. I have never read anything that was prose and yet was poetry, too, in my life before. Perhaps some of our brother *ARGOSY* readers noticed it also. If you did, let us hear from you *via* the Viewpoint.

Mr. Editor, you might put me wise to what kind of literature you call that.

Keep the old treasure ship as it is with just a few more "impossible stories" in it. Edgar Rice Burroughs preferred.

A ten years reader.

E. F.

MYTON, UTAH.

Inclosed find check for four dollars for a renewal of your wonderful magazine. Have been a reader of the *ARGOSY-ALLSTORY* for years, and have always found it a top-notch.

When I first commenced reading the Reader's Viewpoint I was surprised at the various criticisms of the different writers, and was fearful for a time that my favorite magazine would be shot to pieces.

We are ninety miles from the railroad and this is what you might call the "wild and woolly" West, yet we like Western stories, especially a writer who can paint good word pictures. You have them.

But then we don't want all Western stories. We like variety—just such a magazine you have been giving us.

Yours for continued success.

A. R.

FRESNO, CALIF.

For pleasing and entertaining relief and relaxation from the cares and worries of life the general average standard of *ARGOSY* stories suits me thoroughly. I carefully make it a point to keep an issue or two behind in my reading, making the

magazine wait for me instead of the other way around. I have just finished the September 17 issue and enjoyed it even more than ordinarily. For numbing one against his debts and other annoyances I am finding "Desperate Chances," by MacIsaac, a perfect anæsthetic. "The Martinet," by Ben Conlon, was so good that it prompted me to write to him. And Watkins shows clever and finished craftsmanship in telling a flying story. He and Conlon give the impression that they know what they are talking about. Their work has that impressive autobiographic suggestion and makes me wish they would go in for longer stories.

F. A. C.

COLUMBUS, OHIO.

So some sore-head has been roasting this department, has he? It is hard to conceive of any one who is narrow-minded enough to do such a thing. Myself, I think there is more actual enjoyment in reading the views and criticisms of other readers than in reading a short story. Of course, there are exceptions.

In a recent issue there was a letter from another sour note requesting that you discontinue war stories. The request may be justified as far as the writer was concerned, but I think it was hardly necessary for him to go to such lengths in telling what he had done, how he had "got his man" and all that. What did he join the army for? However, be that as it may, there isn't any use of his trying to crab the show for the rest of us. Give us some more good war stories. I, for one, shall not kick if there is one in each issue so long as it is not overdone.

As for "impossible stories," how can we tell just where to draw the line? Even if it were possible to draw such a line, I am in favor of printing more of them. In fact, I am in favor of your using your own judgment. You have been very successful in your selection of stories and I shall continue reading your magazine. I know that when I pick up an *All-Story*, as I still call it, I am perfectly safe in buying it; for one is always certain to get more than he pays for in interesting reading. I have not asked you to print more of but one type, or rather, two types of stories, but whatever you print I know I'll be satisfied.

Don't you think it would be a good idea to enlarge this department? I do. And cut out the initials. If a person does not care to have his name published he has no business writing the

department. If one doesn't like certain types of stories, tell him not to read them, but don't "beef." Constructive criticism is all right, but cut out slinging mud.

Print anything you like. If I don't like it I'll buy the next issue any way, for I know there are lots of folks who have different ideas than mine.

With heartiest good wishes to you and your organization.
L. K. ALDERMAN.

NOEL SHORE, NOVA SCOTIA.

I notice in an issue of recent date, an hysterical outcry against war stories by an ex-soldier. Now, I spent three years in active service in France with the Canadians, and must have seen more of the horrors of war than this soldier whose active service could not have exceeded four or five months. While I am not going to shock you by relating any horrible experiences, I will say I did nothing which I regret, and reading war stories brings back no unpleasant memories. It seems to me any normal person would like to read stories placed in scenes they had visited and based on actions with which they are familiar.

Now, Mr. Editor, you must have hundreds of thousands of ex-service men among your readers in the United States and Canada and other countries. If they are still the red-blooded men they proved to be in France, and have not degenerated into a bunch of nervous old women, let them speak up and demand more war stories.

"Thundering Dawns" was one of the best stories I have ever read. McMorro certainly knows his stuff. "Battle Sight" was interesting, but I think Lawrence got his idea of actual war from the movies. "The Call to Arms" was great. And "King's Khaki" promises to be equally good. Yours for more war stories.
E. M.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

I began your magazine with "The Devil's Flower," by John Wilstach, and have read it ever since. All the serials have been good, though "The War Chief" takes the cake. I procured many back numbers for Edgar Rice Burroughs—who is my favorite author—memorable Indian tale.
W. P. E.

BEECHURST, N. Y.

After too long an absence, I am pleased to find John Wilstach back again and doing a serial. This "bird" always has such unusual themes, brightened with such smart sallies of humor, that he is a delight.
K. P.

ST. HELEN, MICH.

I have been reading the ARGOSY now for several years and would just as soon go without a meal as go without my ARGOSY. "Desperate Chances" was a humdinger. Let's have some more like it. I have got to hand it to J. B., of Montreal, in the September 24 issue. What he says is correct. There is no need that I can see of al-

ways making the English look like suckers. I'm English and proud of it, but I was five days in America before I got my papers out, twenty years ago, and believe I have threatened to quit buying your ARGOSY more than once and there must be lots of your readers that feel the same way, but here's hoping your writers will cut it out and pick on the chinks for a change.
T. S.

WOODHAVEN, N. Y.

I read in your Viewpoint that some persons have read your magazine for years—back as far as 1886 or so. I can beat that. I read it as a small boy in 1883 or 1884, when it was the *Golden Argosy*. At that time three of us boys took separate weeklies. THE ARGOSY, *Golden Days*, and *Youth's Companion*. Then we would exchange and had a glorious time with the stories.

As entertainment the magazine surely is good—the best of its class by far. In passing, I might say it amuses me to note the different comments on how you should choose your contributors—in other words, run your business. I don't think you should be influenced by these individual likes and dislikes.
V. H. MACM.

SOMERSET, MANITOBA.

Personally, I am entirely of the same opinion as W. E. C.—September 17—who suggests that war stories might well be omitted from all magazines. The returned men would scarcely care to read them—they surely had enough of the horrors of war while they were "over there." And I do not think that any one who lost those who were dearest in that terrible carnage, can like them either. So many families were absolutely bereft of all their men relatives, and the horrors of war reacted so terribly even on the non-combatants that the great war is the one subject in all the world which does not lend itself to fiction. We, combatants and non-combatants suffered too dreadfully.

"The War Chief" was too long and there was too much repetition and a sequel would surely be bathos. *Shoz-Dijiji* lost the Indian maid for whom he really cared and the mating of an Indian and a white girl is rarely a success for either. But most of the stories are so good and it takes all sorts to suit all readers.

My own taste inclines to the "different stories" and good detective tales. "Seven Footprints to Satan" was weird and interesting; "The Moon Maid" and the "Sun Makers" also were very interesting, but I really think that "The Moon Pool" so far has not been surpassed. That was a peach of a story.
K. M.

P. S.—By the way—where is Mme. Storey? Hulbert Footner is a first class writer.

If K. M. will recall the opening of "The War Chief" he will realize that its hero was not really an Indian, although brought up as such. Hulbert Footner is now writing another Mme. Storey tale.



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needs for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate in The Munsey Combination

Comprising:
Munsey's Magazine
Argosy-Allstory Wkly
Flynn's Weekly
Minimum space four lines.
Combination line rate
\$3.00
less 2 per cent cash
discount.
Dec. 17th Argosy-Allstory Weekly Forms Close Nov. 19th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

AGENTS: \$13.80 DAILY (IN ADVANCE). SPARE TIME WILL DO. Introduce 12 Months Guaranteed Hosiery. 57 styles, 39 colors, for Men, Women, Children; including latest "Silk to the Top" Ladies' Hosiery. No capital or experience needed. We furnish samples. Silk Hosiery for your own use free. **NEW PLAN.** Maccohee Hosiery Co., Road 27228, Cincinnati, O.

No high-pressure salesmanship necessary selling **LUMINATE**, our Magic Electric WINDOW and OUTDOOR Salesman. Demand established. Color, light, motion gets 'em. Greatest quick-change letter system and snappy two-color posters land orders on demonstration. Hustlers collecting \$100 weekly easy. Protected territory. **DISPLAY PRODUCTS CO.**, M407-9 East 31st St., Kansas City, Mo.

Agents make larger profits selling well known **Ho-Ro-Co Soaps**, Perfumes, Toilet Articles. Our lower prices give larger profits. Over 50,000 cans **La-Eu-Strait Hair Dressing** sold last year. **HO-RO-CO**, 2702 Ho-Ro-Co Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

66 MILES ON ONE GALLON—Amazing. New, Wonderful Moisture Humidifier Gas Saver—and Quick Starter. For all autos. Factory Agents wanted everywhere. 400% profits. 1 Free to introduce. **CRITCHLOW**, CM-427, Wheaton, Ill.

MAKE \$125.00 UP WEEKLY. Represent Manufacturer of Tailored-To-Order Auto Seat Covers. **Biggest Commissions paid daily.** Lowest prices. Highest quality. Most elaborate outfit free. **Marveto Mfr. Co.**, Dept. M, 328-30-32 So. Paulina St., Chicago.

TAILORING SALESMEN make real money selling Davis virgin wool, made-to-measure suits. Low-priced, perfect-fitting, guaranteed. Beautiful fabrics. New merchandising plan doubles sales. Liberal bonuses, cash prizes. Write now. Dept. M. **P. H. DAVIS TAILORING CO.**, Station 30, Cincinnati, Ohio.

MAKE \$45 TO \$100 WEEKLY—full or part time—and liberal bonus, selling **BETTER QUALITY** all-wool made-to-measure suits and overcoats. Save \$18.50 per suit. No experience necessary. Commissions paid in advance. We furnish handsome large match samples and complete instructions **FREE**. Write today! **W. Z. GIBSON**, 161 W. Harrison, Dept. L-409, Chicago.

A LITTLE MANUFACTURING BUSINESS—CRISPETTES. delightful confection and big money maker. We start you. Adams says \$264 profit two days last summer. You might do as well this winter. Write Long Eakins, 1961 High St., Springfield, O.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN TO SELL your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the readers of the Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, Munsey Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. WE COMPOSE MUSIC. OUR COMPOSER WROTE MANY SONG HITS. **MONARCH MUSIC COMPANY**, 236 WEST 55TH ST. (NEAR BROADWAY), DEPT. 109, NEW YORK.

MISCELLANEOUS

LAND FREE IF PLANTED TO BANANAS. BANANAS BEAR A FULL CROP THE SECOND YEAR. \$5.00 monthly will plant five acres, which should pay \$1,500 profit annually. Reliable companies will cultivate and market your bananas for 1-3. Bananas ripen every day and you get your check every 90 days. For particulars address **JANTHA PLANTATION CO.**, Empire Building, Block 970, Pittsburgh, Pa.

MICHIGAN FARMLANDS FOR SALE

\$10 IS ALL I ASK DOWN ON 20 ACRES IN MICH. POTATO BELT. Very easy terms. Near markets, lakes and streams. Write for particulars now. **G. W. SWIGART**, M-1276 First National Bank Building, Chicago.

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED

\$55 FOR PHOTOPLAY PLOTS. STORIES ACCEPTED ANY FORM. Revised, criticized, copyrighted, marketed. Estab. 1917. Booklet free. **UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CO.**, 209 Western & Santa Monica Bldg., Hollywood, Calif.

HELP WANTED

Become a Landscape Architect. Uncrowded profession; wonderful opportunity for money-making. Easily mastered by mail. Earn while you learn. Est. 1916. Write for details. **AMERICAN LANDSCAPE SCHOOL**, 63 Newark, N. Y.

EARN \$25 WEEKLY, SPARE TIME, WRITING FOR NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. DETAILS AND COPYRIGHT BOOK FREE. PRESS SYNDICATE, 997, ST. LOUIS, MO.

HELP WANTED—MALE

EARN \$120 TO \$250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID, AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. WE SECURE POSITION FOR YOU AFTER COMPLETION OF 3 MONTHS' HOME STUDY COURSE OR MONEY REFUNDED. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. WRITE FOR FREE BOOKLET CM-30. **STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INST.**, BUFFALO, N. Y.

FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN. (white or colored), sleeping car, train porters (colored), \$150—\$250 monthly. Experience unnecessary. **836 Railway Bureau**, East St. Louis, Ill.

MEN WANTING OUTDOOR WORK, qualify for forest ranger position. Start \$125 monthly; cabin and vacation; paid the forests; protect the game; give tourists information. Write **MOKANE**, Dept. M-12, Denver, Colo.

EDUCATIONAL

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle, you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, Munsey Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

STORIES WANTED

STORY IDEAS WANTED FOR PHOTOPLAYS AND MAGAZINES. ACCEPTED IN ANY FORM FOR REVISION AND SUBMISSION TO MARKETS. Send Mss. for free criticism or write for booklet, Est. 1917. **UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CO.**, 467 Western & Santa Monica Bldg., Hollywood, Calif.

TOBACCO

TOBACCO HABIT BANISHED. NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM, no matter how strong your craving, no matter what form you use tobacco, there is help for you. Just send postcard or letter for our Free Book. It explains everything. **NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.**, Dept. 812-A, Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED. SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND ADVICE. **WATSON E. COLEMAN**, REGISTERED PATENT LAWYER, 724 NINTH STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for our free Evidence of Invention Blank and Guide Book. "How to Get Your Patent." Send model or sketch of your invention for our Inspection and Instructions Free. Terms Reasonable. **Randolph & Co.**, Dept. 419, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for our Guide Book "How To Obtain A Patent" & Record of Invention Blank, sent Free. Send model or sketch and description of invention for Inspection & Instructions Free. Terms Reasonable. Prompt Attention. Highest References. **VICTOR J. EVANS & CO.**, 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED ON CASH-OR ROYALTY BASIS. Patented or unpatented. In business 24 years. Complete facilities. References. Write **ADAM FISHER MFG. CO.**, 249 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.



"Can he really play?" a girl whispered.
"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in his life."

They Laughed When I Sat Down At the Piano But When I Started to Play!—

ARTHUR had just played "The Rosary." The room rang with applause. Then to the amazement of all my friends, I strode confidently over to the piano and sat down.

"Jack is up to his old tricks," somebody chuckled. The crowd laughed. They were all certain that I couldn't play a single note.

"Can he really play?" I heard a girl whisper to Arthur.

"Heavens, no!" Arthur exclaimed. "He never played a note in all his life. . . ."

I decided to make the most of the situation. With mock dignity I drew out a silk handkerchief and lightly dusted off the piano keys. Then I rose and gave the revolving piano stool a quarter of a turn. The crowd laughed merrily.

Then I Started to Play

Instantly a tense silence fell on the guests. I played the first few bars of Liszt's immortal Liebesträume. I heard gasps of amazement. My friends sat breathless—spellbound! I played on.

A Complete Triumph!

As the last notes of Liebesträume died away, the room resounded with a sudden roar of applause. I found myself surrounded by excited faces. Everybody was exclaiming with delight—

plying me with rapid questions . . . "Jack! Why didn't you tell us you could play like that?"

. . . "Where *did* you learn?"—"who *was* your teacher?"

"I have never even *seen* my teacher," I replied. "And just a short while ago I couldn't play a note."

"Quit your kidding," laughed Arthur, himself an accomplished pianist. "You've been studying for years. I can tell."

"I have been studying only a short while," I insisted. "I kept it a secret so that I could surprise you folks."

No Teacher Needed

Then I told them the whole story.

"It seems just a short while ago that I saw an ad of the U. S. School of Music mentioning a new method of learning to play which only costs a few cents a day. The ad told how a woman had mastered the piano in her spare time at home—and *without a teacher!* The method she used required no laborious scales or exercises. It sounded so convincing that I filled out the coupon requesting the Free Demonstration Lesson.

"It arrived promptly and I started in that very night to study it. I was amazed to see how easy it was to play this new way. I sent for the course and found it was just as easy as A. B. C.! Before I knew it I was playing all the pieces I liked best. I could play ballads or classical numbers or jazz, with equal ease! And I never did have any special talent for music!

Play Any Instrument

You, too, can now learn music—right at home—in half the usual time. You can't go wrong with this simple new method which has already shown almost half a million people how to play their favorite instruments by note. Forget that old-fashioned idea that you need special "talent." Just read the list of instruments in the panel, decide which one you want to play, and the U. S. School will do the rest.

Send for Our Free Booklet and Demonstration Lesson

Thousands of successful students never dreamed they possessed musical ability until it was revealed to them by a remarkable "Musical Ability Test" which we send entirely without cost with our interesting free booklet and Demonstration Lesson.

Right now we are making an offer for a limited number of new students. Sign and send the convenient coupon now—before it's too late. Instruments, supplied when needed, cash or credit.

U. S. School of Music, 7211 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

U. S. School of Music, 7211 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane, Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your offer. I am interested in the following course:

Have you Instrument?.....

Name.....
(Please write plainly)

Address.....

City..... State.....

PICK YOUR INSTRUMENT

Piano	Clarinet
Organ	Flute
Violin	Cello
Drums	Harp and Com-
and	position
Traps	
Banjo	Sight Singing
(Tenor,	Ukulele
Plectrum	Harp
or 5-String)	Cornet
Mandolin	Piccolo
Saxophone	Guitar
Hawaiian	Trombone
Steel	
Guitar	
Voice and Speech Culture	
Automatic Finger Control	
Piano Accordion	